

CORE ONE FOR LOVE — An Amazing Complete Little No

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The

SMART SET

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By Paul Hervey Fox

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Vol. LI

JANUARY, 1917

No. I

The SMART SET

Edited by

George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken

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AND

BURLESQUES, EPIGRAMS, POEMS, SHORT SATIRES, ETC.

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JANUARY, 1917

No. 1

The SMART SET

New Writers; New Ideas.

JERRY HEARD THE CRASH

By June Gibson

SHE was drunk.

She had wide violet eyes and white shoulders and a flipant nose and a mouth that was fascinating.

She was handsomely gowned and wore a string of pearls that fell to her knees.

But she was drunk.

Her hair was loosened, and she was having difficulty with her eyelids.

She staggered.

She was horribly drunk.

"Young woman," I said, "you are drunk."

She laughed and pointed her finger at me.

I became angry.

I slapped her face.

* * * * *

Jerry heard the crash.

When he saw the broken mirror and my bleeding hand, he explained to the hostess and called a taxi.



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THE TOAST

By Oscar Lewis

SHE was certainly very homely. All her life she had been ugly, surprisingly so. And to-night, which was the night of her great triumph, she was positively hideous. Hardly an hour before she had left the theater; even now during little instants of quiet she could close her eyes and hear the waves of applause, mounting and ebbing steadily, always swelling to a spontaneous climax after each of the endless curtain-calls. A great triumph. . . .

And now at supper at her own apartments, she was telling this little group of friends how she had done it.

"It was my ugliness," she told them, triumphantly. "What did they care about my acting. Was it good or bad? They didn't even notice; they were gaping at my hideous nose. It was my skinny, stringy neck that fascinated them, my astonishing ears, this scrawny thatch on my head. When I smiled they fell into an appalled silence; if I laughed they clutched at the arms of their seats.

"It was all deliberately planned. For months I studied and practised and planned each tiny effect. No woman has worked harder or more conscientiously to improve her appearance than I did to remove the last vestiges of attractiveness from mine; few of them have had anything like my success. Of course, nature gave me a splendid groundwork to build upon. . . . And to-night I made the most of it. I have capitalized homeliness. I am as proud of my face as any beauty ever was of hers. Homeliness? How I love the word!"

She sat down and there was a little spontaneous storm of applause. The circle of admiring faces smiled at her. Men reached across the table and grasped her hand warmly. One woman threw an arm affectionately over her shoulders.

Across the table genial old John Canvin got to his feet. His face was a deeper red even than usual and he swayed back and forth a trifle, though this last really was scarcely noticeable. He held his glass aloft.

"To the homeliest woman in the world!" he cried gayly.

The toast was drunk amid applause and laughter. She bowed and smiled and thanked them graciously. . . .

* * * *

But two hours later she stole out of her dark apartment and crept noiselessly down the rear stairs to the street.

For nearly a mile and a half she hurried over deserted and echoing sidewalks.

Dawn was dimly approaching when she entered a second doorway and stole past a sleeping night clerk.

At the end of the hallway on the second floor she stepped through a window and out upon a fire-escape.

She climbed up seven stories, counting them carefully, and reaching the eighth window, which was open, she climbed softly inside, stealing silently across the room.

She then drew a long knife from beneath her cloak and murdered John Canvin as he lay asleep in his bed.



SCORE ONE FOR LOVE

By Lillian F. Barrett

CHAPTER I.

MR. JOHN WENDELL COX was tired—yes, tired and bored. It was raining outside; it had been raining in a dull, hopeless sort of way for a week.

Even the limousine that had whirled him from his quarters at the Ritz to the office had not been proof against the damp chill of the atmosphere, and he felt himself pervaded as to body, mind and soul by the grey drizzle.

John Wendell Cox was thirty-five a man of quick, enterprising mind and a finished personality. He had family back of him—you'd know that to look at him and he knew that you would, too—and a fair amount of worldly wealth; but he had preferred to begin at the bottom round, and work his way, by sheer force of ideas, to the top. He had succeeded, of course, for, to use his own words, brute force of theory never fails. And he had his theory, which was — but let us not go into it here. Suffice it to say that he was a destructive critic of the fine arts and brought to the support of his ideas a florid fluency of English that had in it something almost Gallic, and hence immoral. As someone once said, he was a juggler of language and could keep three dictionaries in the air at once.

At first he succeeded simply in provoking an uproar; then he was accepted; then he was sought out and courted, and finally he was offered the editorship of one of New York's big magazines.

He had filled the post daringly well and had recreated the periodical in his own image. More than that, he had

put his stamp on the great world of the drama, which, though struggling bitterly at first, had finally settled down into a coma of submission.

But as he sat in the office this particular morning he felt no satisfaction in things accomplished. There was a pile of manuscripts before him from which his mind continually strayed.

He lit a cigarette. That brought into play his hands—delicate, supple, nervous, yet firm and brown like an Arab's, the sort of hands that in the Orient strangle capiously. And as one looked at Mr. Cox there was a forced realization that the Oriental strain in him was quite the predominating one. It was obvious in the slight strength and nervous agility of the figure, in the brown skin and dark eyes, so piercingly alert and yet so smoulderingly sensuous. Beautiful music, beautiful paintings, beautiful women! He needed these to satisfy the one side of his nature; his work fed the other. He recognized his needs and deliberately satisfied them. He had refined his pleasures to an excruciating essence, with now and then an occasional outburst of brutalization, redeemed only by his conception of the grotesqueness of it all.

Marriage he had always deemed a blunder; love a necessity. There had been a legion of women in his life, for the most part the over-cultivated, carefully nurtured creatures of society. From these he felt finer tones could be drawn than from instruments of less rare material.

He had always come back to women of the type with an even keener relish after an affair with someone of grosser fibre. He avoided women of the stage;

they lacked finesse; and besides, he disliked the idea of a woman presenting herself as a spectacle to anyone who happened to be able to pay. Oh! he was very particular in his choice, and his supreme efficiency in the manipulation of an affair once started was equaled only by his skill in bringing it to a successful and complete close at the exactly correct moment. He was ruthless and he was competent.

And yet he was forced to admit that his latest affair of the heart had assumed a startling aspect last night. There had been a scene and something on the part of the lady that in a lower stratum would have appeared suspiciously like hysterics. Now John Wendell Cox hated scenes; he had always set them down as of the bourgeoisie, things out of the ken of women of his world. But now! It was very annoying and he had passed a restless night as a result. And this morning neuralgia and a dank drizzle had him in dreary thrall.

He braced himself with an effort, lit another cigarette, looked at his hands and went to work.

Stupid stuff, all of it! Stories of war, and prostitutes, and the eternal triangle, and—

One manuscript caught his eye. On its first page, neatly typed, he read:

ANN WINTHROP,
CHERRYFIELD,
MAINE.

Winthrop argued blue blood, if Cherryfield argued rusticity. Cherryfield! He wondered what it was like as his eyes rested dully on the vista of rain-swept roofs outside. Heavens! What an infernal week! He turned to the perusal of the manuscript.

Mr. Cox hated happy stories, and this came decidedly into the happy category, but there was something about it that was different—yes, elusively different. It was not the sort of outburst that comes as the result of disgusting health. Mr. Cox felt perfect health incompatible with intellectual and emotional development. It was the ex-

pression of a fastidious happiness that one felt instinctively came from a nature capable of the finest shadings. And yet it breathed freshly of Cherryfield and the woods and streams and nature in general. The thread of the story was as nothing; the treatment whimsical. Mr. Cox was charmed.

He had always regarded nature as an estimable thing; something quite necessary, in fact, to week-end parties in summer and motor trips in spring. One year he had gone so far as to adopt as his newest pose the "child of nature" theory, and had foregone for awhile club and boudoir life and spoken largely, if somewhat vaguely, of fishing trips and his hunting lodge in the Adirondacks. He had deceived no one, however, least of all himself. Of course, bizarre, Oriental bathrobes constituted one kind of *négligée*, but blue flannel shirts and khaki things of undiscussable cut were of distinctly another. So he had finally settled back inevitably as an offspring of the electric light and decadent culture of the city.

But now, this Miss Ann Winthrop presented the Nature he had considered so tediously exploited in a new guise. She put it before him as a tremulous palpitating thing with a sort of *air intime* about it, and it was that particular *air intime* refined to just the right degree that Mr. Cox could never resist. He let his imagination play for a moment upon the little lady who had created the pastoral—the Cherryfield fair one who even at long distance had aroused his lagging curiosity. Then with a masterly air he dictated a letter requesting Miss Winthrop to come in to see him at his office the next time she happened to be in the city. He was conscious, as he always was in his delicate relationships with his female contributors, of striking the nicest possible balance between editor and man; and he wondered as he signed the letter with his customary cabalistic flourish just how much Miss Winthrop would be overawed by his invitation.

A mere incident in the career of an

exceedingly busy man and one soon lost in the general rush of events!

CHAPTER II.

JOHN WENDELL COX usually spent his summers in Paris—that is, somewhere in the neighborhood of Paris. He had gone over the year before, in spite of the warnings of friends and the press as to the danger involved in crossing the high seas. But once there he was so afflicted by the forlorn, helpless, limp condition of things that he had been unable to stand the strain of the depression and had hurried back to America. He was quite equal to meeting any emergency dealing with submarines and shipwreck, but felt himself a hopeless coward when it came to facing the big issues of suffering and death and despair that confronted him at his every turn in France. So he had duly registered a determination not to go back to the continent till the war was quite over and Paris had had time to recover her debonair self and could present a smile of welcome to her returning guests.

And now, here in New York, strange problems were confronting him. The woman, his latest passion, was continuing to be disagreeable, to make scenes, to weary him. He had ended with her; she knew it and instead of gracefully submitting to the inevitable, as her predecessors had done, she was kicking up an infernal row. He felt as limp and helpless in dealing with this situation as he had in witnessing the devastation of the war. Under normal conditions a hurried trip to the other side would have been the solution; he would have returned to find the lady smiling and perhaps interested elsewhere. The mix-up in Europe was most certainly very inopportune and very, very annoying.

CHAPTER III.

AGAIN John Wendell Cox was at his desk; again smoking and handling his mail. And again Cherryfield offered

a happy digression. Miss Winthrop wrote a facile hand and seemed singularly at her ease for a country girl. There was an air about the short note that was provocative, and the writer showed evidence of a decided, if somewhat quaint, sense of humor. And yet it was all very simple and fresh and direct, and Mr. Cox felt as if a breath of country air had passed lightly over his fevered, restless brain. She was coming to New York the following week, and would, if she could thread her way through the mazes of the big city, avail herself of his invitation.

"New York is all so new to me, and consequently startling. I feel afraid of the thought of all it involves. Is it my country up-bringing? Or is it that the future, perhaps, sometimes casts a shadow? I wonder—"

He read this part over several times. The thought of a young, innocent girl on the threshold of New York existence is not a novel one to the average sophisticated city man; but that simple paragraph somehow or other gripped John Wendell Cox, and forged a virtuous determination within him, that, if Miss Ann Winthrop should come to New York, he'd see her through in the right way. Her simple naïveté contrasted most favorably with the exotic finesse and subtle intricacies of the woman with whom he was now so badly entangled.

So at intervals his mind dwelt with a pleasing anticipation upon the coming meeting. The day before Miss Winthrop was booked to arrive, however, the thought flashed across Mr. Cox's mind that he was a fool. Cherryfield, no doubt, spelt a certain dowdiness of appearance, and John Cox was ruthless in his demand that the women with whom he had to do be faultlessly garbed. He had been projecting the mind of the little country girl into the perfectly clothed body of a city bred woman, and the incongruity of it had failed to strike him until now. His interest in the coming interview abated—in proportion as his curiosity increased.

CHAPTER IV

THE next day was one of intense sunshine but with a fresh breeze. John Cox walked to his office, and had the satisfied feeling that he was doing something elemental and generally wholesome. He took long, deep breaths and his mind dwelt on stretches of woods and birds and fields and cows. The lady arrived soon after he did, before his vista of things spiritual had shrunk to the limited dimensions of things temporal.

The relief that came with the realization that the white flannel suit was perfectly tailored was equalled only by intense admiration for the eyes—eyes that were a deep blue the man had never seen before, that had infinite, baffling depths, that looked strange, strange things at one yet were indifferently easy in their acceptance of one.

"I am Mr. Cox," he said as he shook hands with her, and the banality of this as an opening remark struck him as totally absurd.

"Yes, I know," she answered with the faintest suggestion of a smile as she sat down.

His mind registered an approval of her foot. He wished she would take off her gloves that he might see her hands.

They looked at each other for a moment.

"You begin," she said, and he wasn't quite sure whether to read irony or embarrassment into her tone.

"You come from Cherryfield," he began, and they both laughed quite heartily at the unexpected flatness of it.

"Is that an accusation?" she smiled.

She was undeniably pretty, with a pale goldenness of hair that in a city woman might have argued a hairdresser's art. The brows were dark and arched gracefully as she talked. The lips were red as she held them compressed; redder still when a fleeting smile glimpsed the white teeth.

John Wendell Cox was a brilliant conversationalist. At a dinner he easily outshone everyone else in rapier crit-

icism and alert wit. In a tête-à-tête, whatever the sex involved, he was in the habit of capping each remark of his vis-à-vis with an epigram so clever and so final withal that the matter ended right there.

But this morning his complete mastery of himself and the English language seemed to have deserted him. His neuralgia, was it? Or the stress of the recent scenes with his petulant lady? He struggled for his usual calm.

"Accusation? Oh no! Decidedly not! Flattery, rather. The fact is, I'm tired of the city."

"You mean, you're tired of city women?"

He stared for a moment; her insight had in it something of the disconcerting.

Then "Yes," he said deliberately. "I'm tired of city women."

He saw that she took from his remark everything he intended, but the blue eyes kept him off their depths and she immediately changed the subject.

"My manuscript! You liked my story?"

"Indeed, yes! It was so—so immensely different, and to be different is always a virtue."

"I see; Cherryfield to you, as New York to me!"

She studied him seriously a moment.

"I think I shall come to the city to live next year. I have spent all my life in the country. I have a small income. Do you think—" she hesitated gracefully. He liked her way of appealing to him. "Do you think I could make things go here with my writing?"

"I could help you," he answered majestically.

She smiled her thanks graciously, but did not seem unduly overwhelmed.

"I must go," she said suddenly and rose.

"Where are you staying?"

He was fighting for time, with a feeling that somehow or other he had not gotten anywhere. The girl's deliberate calm seemed to desert her. The eternal feminine confessed itself in a quick flush and a slight tremulousness. For

some reason or other she did not want to admit her address.

"Oh!—I—that is—I'm not staying anywhere. I shall go back to Cherryfield to-night," she almost burst out.

He looked at her kindly. "Never mind, if you don't want to tell me; only don't go back to Cherryfield just yet."

She quite recovered herself as they smiled into each other's eyes.

"You see," she explained, "as a stranger here, I took the first hotel that presented itself. I find it rather—rather—"

"I understand perfectly," he said. "Why not try another one—say—"

He racked his brains desperately, trying to recall the names of various hotels of eminent respectability suited to just such needs as this. Then with lightning inspiration—

"Say the Murray Hill."

She flashed at him a glance bright with what might have been gratitude, and yet again it might have been amusement.

"Ah! of course, the Murray Hill! I shall get myself within its chaste walls at once!"

"And then?"

"And then—Oh, I don't know. I have to think."

"I shall see you again?"

"Oh! undoubtedly!"

He felt that she made the good-by that followed deliberately casual and unsatisfying.

CHAPTER V

YET, as he thought it over, and it is remarkable how much of his mind the incident occupied, he decided that artifice of any sort was quite out of keeping with the frank blue eyes and direct bearing of the girl. He eventually attributed the vagueness and dimness of outline of the recent interview to embarrassment on her part, and to his own lack of knowledge of the feminine heart in its untrained, primitive state. He was in the habit of creating a vivid impression in first interviews;

the feeling that, if he had made any impression at all in the present instance, it was one of decidedly neutral tints, made him quite keen for the next meeting, when he promised himself to do better. Besides, to exploit a pure, unsophisticated girl (in a perfectly honorable way, of course, for Mr. John Wendell Cox still clung to his scheme of acting the protector of this winsome Cherryfield virgin) promised to be a refreshing diversion, particularly at this season of the year.

So Mr. Cox continued to walk to the office every morning, continued to take long, deep breaths and to feel generally virtuous. A week passed; he grew restive. Two weeks passed; he grew angry and decidedly mortified. His offer to help had been obviously spurned, and no doubt Cherryfield had long since claimed its own. But then, what possible charm could any woman from the hinterland have for him—over nurtured, over cultivated, over refined product of civilization that he was? Ah well! He permitted himself a shrug, and again the sensitive hands came into play as he lit a cigarette.

Just at that point, of course, she was announced — radiant, fresh, and yet with a suggestion of a droop to the slight figure, and faint shadows under the blue eyes. His gladness at seeing her quite startled him.

She tried to ignore the three weeks' lapse; but he pressed her in regard to it. "You have doubtless been seeing our big city. One can learn much in three weeks."

She hesitated a second.

"It has cost me three weeks to take in my first impression of it—and," this time with the flash of a smile, "and of you."

He admitted his surprise.

"I had thought, when you left me last time, there had been no impression—that is, of me—"

"Ah! then you *did* think, after I had left you?"

This was more than he was quite ready to admit, so he waived the query.

"You have been writing?"

"A little, and making plans. You said you would help me?"

He copied her direct, business-like tone now. "Yes."

"I shall come to New York in the Fall and take an apartment."

"Not alone!" he expostulated, and they both enjoyed the absurdity of his dismay and laughed heartily.

"Seriously," he continued. "I mean it. You see I know New York—" He was enjoying this new rôle to the utmost, with a keen relish for the novelty of it—

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-four! But hundreds of girls are doing it."

Protest struggled with amusement in her tone.

"Ah yes! But somehow—you—" his eyes took her in quite thoroughly—"are different, and I want you to stay so." They rested a moment on this; her faint flush satisfied him of his effect—

"You insist on a duenna—?"

The fact that she attributed to him the right to insist had its due effect on him.

"Absolutely." He was masterful.

She sighed her surrender and rose.

"I shall leave some stories with you. I go away to-morrow."

"Oh!" He forged a sudden resolution. "Have you seen anything of our country districts? We have them, you know—Long Island—"

She shook her head. The eyes were quite dazzling as he got them almost on a level with his own and he lost himself for a moment in the contemplation of the blue depths.

"Couldn't we?" they smiled into each other's eyes, and it was remarkable how much ground they covered in the doing it. "Couldn't we motor out somewhere for dinner? Beau Sejour, perhaps!"

"I should love it," she said simply.

"Where are you staying?" and her quick reply of "Murray Hill" brought another laugh as they shook hands.

"At three?"

"At three."

At the door she turned and her tone was whimsical.

"Is your decision about the duenna quite irrevocable?"

"Quite!" he rejoined decidedly, and sat down at his desk with an amused yet half-smouldering look in his dark eyes.

CHAPTER VI

THEY stepped quite simply into the easiest possible relation of complete understanding and *bon camaraderie*. There were no preliminaries; they accepted each other as they stood, and devoted themselves quite artlessly to getting the most out of the present. Besides, in being shut into a high-powered car with a person of the opposite sex, there is always something that makes for a peculiar intimacy and spirit of adventure. John Wendell Cox handled his car as he handled his pen—boldly, ruthlessly. The girl said very little as they made their way through the crowded thoroughfares that are the necessary preliminaries to any suburban run. But she watched the man keenly, the decisive turns and quick moves that registered the agile mind that prompted them. She watched and there was an unwilling admiration in her eyes, that seemed to struggle with faint amusement, that in turn struggled with a brooding shadow in the blue depths.

As they left the city behind them and felt the freshness of the country green in the air they talked more — easily, without effort, letting idea brush idea lightly. There was a fresh wholesomeness in the whole thing that revived John Cox's jaded city nerves; and yet there was just enough amorous interest involved to add a charming piquancy to the situation.

She approved the motor, and he showed her what it could do when they got out on the Speedway. Then to his surprise she begged for the wheel and showed him in her manipulation thereof that New York did not have a monopoly on high-powered cars, and that dwellers in the hinterland nowadays were fairly well up in motor lore.

She seemed to have divined with her quick feminine intuition that John Cox admired a woman who was fearless.

They stopped after a while, and got out to sit on a fallen tree by the wayside. Then she told him a little of her life in Cherryfield. Her father was an Englishman, very much of a student, who had come to this country soon after his wife's death, and had led the life of a recluse, till his own death a few years before.

"My existence has been a narrow one," she ended sadly—"French governesses, English servants, my father—that has been my world! Your note called me out of my lethargy and made me realize I had the right to live my own life as I chose.

She raised her frank eyes to his. He had been watching her eagerly.

"But admit you were surprised a little that first day I came to the office?"

He smiled. "I had no idea Cherryfield could boast such a tailor. But tell me—you are twenty-four—have you—?"

She read his thoughts and faced him squarely.

Her answer, "I have never been in love," filled him with a strange relief. She read it and flashed out at him in a second.

"I see. To teach a novice will be a new diversion, perhaps!" She regretted the words the minute she had said them. "I'm sorry," she faltered. Then in a gay tone "But tell me of your life—"

"New York," he said drily.

"The usual number of love affairs, I suppose?"

Her casual way of dealing with subjects of this sort almost staggered him. He put it down, however, to the influence of the French governesses. But whatever the source, it did add piquancy to the situation.

"The number of usual affairs," he corrected.

She had a straight drop into seriousness again.

"But for an affair or a woman to be unusual is to be marked out by the

Fates for tragedy, don't you think?" "What do you consider tragedy for a woman?"

She thought deeply. "Oh! I don't know. To leave her life un-lived, perhaps!" He was surprised at the intensity of her tone. "Ah! your New York! It glooms ahead of me! The future fills me with apprehensions! And yet! I feel somehow or other, for better or worse, it has to be New York!"

He thought he almost saw tears in her eyes, but she rose quickly and turned away. Then she faced him tremulously—

"I am frightened, and —" her tone lightened—"you know, I am hungry. Your Beau Sejour, how far is it?"

They were very gay after that, particularly at dinner, which he ordered served on the terrace.

He had the satisfaction of feeling that his companion "got" everything he said, and the added satisfaction of feeling that everything he said was worth while. She was a remarkable conversationalist herself, he found, and she provoked him to his most dazzling brilliancy. It was all quite wonderful, and yet all quite different from the exotic scintillation of New York drawing rooms. It combined finesse with ingenuousness, purity with sophistication in an odd degree; but above all he was conscious of exhilarating wholesomeness, and for the first time in his career he got up from the table, having quite forgotten to ask for the wine card. "A tremendous tribute to the woman!" he thought afterwards.

They rode home in that strange hush that comes with twilight in the woods. As the man looked at the pure outline of the girl's face against the deepening shadows, he, too, felt that strange things loomed ahead; the stirring of his senses, that came always with the thought of a pretty woman, was now mingled with a feeling of sadness and uncertainty that was very new to him.

She felt him looking at her and turned to meet his gaze. This time he was sure that there were tears and shadows in the eyes that smiled into his.

It was a glorious night, deep blue, with here and there a star above the black, shapeless trees. They rode in silence for a long time, each buried in thought that was deep and formless. A cluster of lights flashed upon them and she aroused herself to ask the name of the village. Then another and another, and in a second their twilight reverie was broken by the realization that they were back in the intricacies of bridge traffic, with New York brilliant and aglow directly ahead. They responded at once to the appeal of the lights, as they had to the mysterious sadness of the woods, and the short run back through the city left them quite mercilessly alert and a-quiver.

But to his suggestion that they drop in somewhere for an act of a play and take in a roof afterwards, she shook her head.

"Too many new impressions in one day would be fatal to me. Besides, I'm a little tired—"

He let her go reluctantly, after they had shaken hands.

"Till Fall, then?"

Again a sigh welled up from somewhere and he was conscious of an uneasiness struggling in her mind as she said, "Perhaps! That is—yes—I'm sure—I shall write you."

With that she left him, eager, restless, puzzled at the haunting riddle of her.

CHAPTER VII

JOHN WENDELL COX, as has been said before, was clever, exceptionally clever, and of a remarkable sense of humor. He realized to the fullest that he was at an age when a psychological crisis might be expected in his life. To go on in the future as he had gone on in the past, he had felt for the last few weeks, would be intolerable—in fact, impossible. In just what way the difference between past and future would be evinced he didn't quite know, but he determined, with a sort of amused fatalism, to leave the issue to chance and then to abide by the decision thereof.

If he were destined to get religion—or give up smoking or—well—whatever the outcome, he would enjoy it, provided only a change from the accepted order of things was involved. So he waited, a little cynically, a little expectantly as one awaits the rise of the curtain on a first night.

The arrival of Miss Winthrop on the scene was the event of complication, he now felt sure. He let his thoughts dwell on her quite easily, without any protest from his inner self, for long stretches at a time after the motor trip. He admitted candidly that she baffled him and he enjoyed the sensation, for it was a new one to him. He was in the habit of categorizing and pigeon-holing personalities on the instant of encounter; and now here was one that refused classification, and he was forced to leave it on his desk, where it constantly defied his gaze and distracted his attention from other things. Purity of soul plus an almost reckless sophistication of mind! An untutored primordial heart in a faultlessly-clothed body! So it ran through his mind, forenoon, afternoon and evening, till the matter became almost an obsession with him.

But in the meantime no word from Cherryfield! He read over her last manuscripts, which possessed the same haunting charm that their writer did, and wrote a little note, stating his acceptance of them. But still no answer! And he was forced to go through the hot, dreary round of summer weeks unsatisfied.

In September a letter came.

"I have fought a good fight," she wrote, "with the result the only one to be expected. I suppose that the Mammon in me has come out victorious. I shall be in New York very soon and shall let you know when and where my new ménage is to be. Oh! I know it's best for me to stay where I am—here in the country where relationships are as direct and free from pretense and guile as Nature itself. But I feel the beating of sensible images upon me and a tumultuous capacity for living, as one lives in a great city. But I have strug-

gled. Whatever happens—will you remember that? My new rôle I adopt not flippantly, but after long consideration and due maceration of the flesh. But life is a motley, isn't it? And the stupendous desire of what I want is stronger than I am."

The serious tone of the note laid hold of Mr. John Wendell Cox. There was in it almost a note of tragedy, and it seemed quite uncalled for. But as he thought it over the conviction settled in his mind that for a sensitive soul there was always tragedy involved in a big decision; and there certainly was a big decision here—a young girl pulling up stakes in her native town and moving to an utterly strange metropolis. Again his mind registered virtuously the decision to see the lady through in the right way and to play out his new rôle of protector to the finish.

CHAPTER VIII

A MONTH later he received a little note.

"Will you come and have tea with me to-morrow? I am inordinately curious about the people I meet in general, and I want to find out whether you take lemon or cream."

This amused him; he was glad she had reverted to the casual again.

He went, of course. Her apartment of four rooms was charming, all dull blues and buffs with a tendency to odd angles as to furniture and a vagueness of outline as to hangings. It was a chill day in October and there was a suggestion of a glow in the grate. She, herself, was in dull blue with a deep Japanese girdle, the yellows in which caught and reflected back the yellow of her wonderful hair. That part of the man's nature that insisted ruthlessly upon his going to every art-exhibit in town, and that forced him to pay fabulous sums for chance pictures that caught his fancy approved at once the room and the costume and the woman. It all quite satisfied him and he sank with a restful sigh into the corner of the big divan that flanked the fireplace.

She poured his tea. "You know we women are gifted with uncanny insight when it comes to facing the big issues of existence; it's lemon, isn't it?"

"Marvelous!" he ejaculated. "Life can offer no problem you should hesitate to grapple with after that."

"You pass the apartment?"

"Unconditionally!"

"And the locality? I—" She hesitated and vaguely stirred her tea. "I wasn't quite ready to face uptown yet. I still feel myself overwhelmed by the immensity of city life. It's quieter down here."

"And the duenna?" he queried.

"Oh! I've got an estimable watch dog with every possible qualification," she laughed.

"I had thought," he said, "that you would bring one from Cherryfield—some relative, possibly."

"I have no one," she said, and there was a suggestion of defiance in her voice as she faced him. "The College Agency has supplied my needs. Ah! you are ready for more tea! Certainly, smoke by all means!"

He did not offer her the cigarettes; he judged the mouth too fresh and clear-cut to be polluted by the noxious weed. "Cherryfield will make a prig of me yet," he thought, and smiled at himself with good-humored amusement.

The smoke of his Dimitrinos, that seemed heavy with suggestions of the Orient, the suppressed glow in the grate, and the low, even tones of the woman, all made for a certain sensuous comfort and well-being that counted for much with John Wendell Cox. Besides, the tangles of his other most troublesome affair had just worked themselves out, and this was the first time he had felt in an absolutely contented mood for many months. In some way he connected the straightening out of this most intricate past amour of his with the restful influence and perfect poise of Miss Ann Winthrop, and he was correspondingly grateful to her.

He rose at length reluctantly.

"We must do things together—opera

and—of course you ride horseback?"

It was odd for John Cox to propose doing things. Generally his was the rôle of the party of the second part—the solicited, not the solicitor.

Her hesitation but provoked his eagerness and they closed eventually with an appointment for an early morning canter.

At the door, as they shook hands, his eyes lingered on her hair, which seemed brighter still in the gathering dusk.

"It is quite beautiful," he said simply and she drew away too quickly for him to see whether there was pleasure or resentment in her strange eyes.

That was the beginning of things. They rode in the park and motored around in the suburbs and were gay. They went to the opera and were sad and thrilled and felt tremulously close to each other.

Mr. Cox met few social obligations as time went on, and went less and less frequently to his club, where his acutely apt conversation and the wild fire of his humor were sadly missed. "A new book is in progress!" said one. "A new vagary of the heart!" quoth another; but John Wendell only smiled and shook his head when his fitful absences were under discussion.

But he went more and more frequently to the little apartment to tea, and the world outside seemed singularly remote. At times he found the girl intensely daring, provocative, and was obliged to keep himself well in hand; at others melancholy, depressed—and then again frankly companionable. He like each mood best in its turn. And so they passed by imperceptible leaps and bounds into a wonderful, ineffable intimacy that yet had a remarkable practicable foundation.

The duenna had been discovered one evening in a state of wistful alcoholism and had been promptly discarded.

"But after all," said Mr. John Wendell Cox, "the coin a man offers to a woman is stamped with her own image. You—" he said earnestly, "need no protector."

She stared at him wild-eyed at this,

and for a brief second he had a startled suspicion that she was about to cry. That was the last time the duenna subject was reverted to, but the new freedom of the girl brought the two even closer together. She started to learn to cook, and Mr. Cox, sated with club existence, relished to the utmost her successes and enjoyed her failures. She attempted no big things, a neighboring grill providing invariably the pièce de résistance of the dinner, but she managed to create about herself an atmosphere of charming domesticity that he found irresistible. And of course there was always a neat little maid that could be summoned from the depths of nowhere, who did things that were really actively unpleasant.

That was Ann Winthrop's chief charm; she had the knack of relegating to the background the unpleasant details of existence. One viewed her, herself, as a finished product; and John Cox, in speculating upon the oddness of this in a country bred maid, came to the conclusion she was the sort that was born finished. And so with everything about her. He had been introduced into her apartment when it was perfectly equipped; she had known enough to spare him the harrowing details involved in the decorating process.

Her clothes—and he was an acute observer and fair judge of values—were another source of wonder to him. They were simple but exquisite in their simplicity, and yet the hours spent in procuring such creations on a limited income were passed over undiscussed. He set her down as a clever manager and admired her the more.

Then again, she had remarkable intelligence and helped him with his work. They read the same things; and he found her criticisms keenly to the point in hand.

She quite startled him one day. "It's too bad you're wasting time, you know. I hate to see a brilliant man dissipating his energies—and of course you are brilliant." She smiled up at him. "But you are wasting time."

He pondered this; it had never

struck him before. Not the least evidence of the change that was gradually taking place in the soul of John Wendell Cox was his willingness to listen to someone else's ideas as worthy of consideration, without the ulterior motive of refuting or capping them with a dazzling display of pyrotechnics. He gave Ann's remark serious attention and then set it aside for future deliberation. He was not quite ready to meet the issue involved.

And yet again. One day they were motoring. "I didn't like your last article at all. I thought it rather—cheap. Why do you do those things when you are up to so much better?"

He took the accusation thoughtfully, for he realized the truth of the point she drove home so sharply.

He was talking to her of her own stories once, suggesting a change here and there to meet the needs of his magazine.

"You say your magazine represents a mood," she said. "Isn't it, rather, that *you* are the mood, and create the magazine in your own image?" There was a trace of defiance in the eyes.

He smiled.

"And you object to being moulded, is that the idea?"

"Decidedly, yes!"

Then after a pause: "You have been suffered to absorb other people's personalities too easily. Your mind is a free eater—why not—oh—diet a bit?"

That ended the discussion, so he printed her stories as she gave them to him.

There was another point, also, in which she triumphed absolutely. She refused to go to any of the theaters or restaurants with him.

"I want you to see the night life of the city," he pleaded, but she shook her head.

"No, no!" she protested vehemently. "Don't ask me! I—I cannot!"

Then as the days grew longer and spring was in the air, she grew restless and whimsical. The change in her worried him not a little.

"Why not go away somewhere for a

rest?" he argued. "You live the life of a recluse here, in Washington Square. You must meet people."

She looked strange, strange things at him and held out her hands. He took them.

"Ah! don't force an issue! Let's drift! I'm quite, quite content with just you."

It was the first time the personal note had been struck. She looked frightened as she said the words, quickly drew away her hands, and sent him home, a-flutter and unstrung as a school-boy who just begins to suspect he is in the presence of that great, ineffable experience called love.

Yes, John Wendell Cox was in love, for the first time in his exceedingly varied and somewhat lurid career. He had drifted the more easily and unconsciously into it, the less susceptible he had deemed himself. He had banked too much on past experience and immunity. But the fact struck him now full in the face. Then, having recovered from the shock of the first realization, he faced about to enjoy the humor of the thing. It was absurd; it was ludicrous; it was ridiculous! But it *was* just the same, and as an existing fact it had to be dealt with. He mused on it inordinately and got the greatest possible amount of relish from the contemplation of himself in his new predicament.

By a natural sequence of thought and with no abatement in his appreciation of the humor of the situation he now turned himself gently to the consideration of matrimony. He kept his mind focused on the estimable qualities and traits of the young lady. Her hair! Her eyes! The slight droop of her graceful figure! The brown nervous hands tightened on the arms of his chair. He relaxed a bit. He would shut that current of thought off for awhile.

The real reason John Cox had never married before was because, in spite of the radical ideas he entertained in other things, he knew that, when it came to the selection of a woman to

bear his time-honored name, he would demand purity and uprightness, and the upright and pure of heart had always up to this time sadly wearied him. Goodness and fascination had been mutually exclusive terms in his vocabulary. And now here was his carefully worked out theory sadly exploded. He was face to face with a woman of unquestionable integrity and of powerful physical allure. There was but one solution, and he determined to bring matters to a crisis at once.

The morning after he had threshed the matter out to his satisfaction he discovered a little note on his desk. "I am running away for a week to rest and think. There are a few facts you and I have to face together — and soon—"

That was all; there was something ominous in the brevity of it. "There are a few facts—". What did she mean by that? He grew restive in the pondering of it and in the intense desire to see her once more. His nerves finally got the better of him and he flung out of the office with the resolve of spending the week-end out of town.

John Wendell Cox usually dodged domestic parties. He was in the habit of week-ending at houses where there were gathered representative members of that clever, quite unscrupulous, marvelously cultured class with which he was generally identified in town. He passed religiously all invitations "to spend a restful week-end" with some friend and his wife out on Long Island or in Jersey. Domesticity in any form, he frankly admitted, bored him.

He remembered his keen disappointment eight years before when Philip Sterner, his former colleague and staunch friend from college days, had announced his intention of entering into double harness. He had spent many bitter hours as a result, for he realized the inevitable break in their friendship, and things had never been quite the same between them since. He had met Mrs. Sterner in town several times the first year or two after the marriage, had marveled at Philip's complacency

at his choice and set the lady down as of a decidedly dun-colored personality. Philip, too, as they met less and less frequently in town, seemed to him to be undergoing a fatty degeneration, as it were, of his being. John Wendell Cox had ruthlessly refused all invitations to the Sterner ménage, and considered himself well rid of it all when the invitations ceased to be given.

This particular morning, however, as he hurried out of the office building his thoughts reverted warmly to old Philip. After all, they'd lived through the best of life together, those formative years when a man's ideas and passions are in the moulding. They'd threshed out big things together, walking in the Park out under the stars or sprawled in very cramped bachelor quarters in the early fifties. They'd theorized and idealized together with all the vast enthusiasm youth is capable of. Then in due time had come the realization that theories have to be altered to meet the needs of advancing civilization; that ideals are but perishable things, after all; that the only thing that stays with us always, unchangeable, immutable through all the ages, is the material self with its unsatiable, ruthless demands. So there had followed a period of brutalization, when they went in quite freely for drink, exchanged notes on their amours and felt proudly that at last they had come into their rightful heritage of worldliness. With success in their literary work had come another change. They laughed heartily at their past excesses and themselves in retrospect, and each proceeded to work out a system of life that would best suit the inner man, whose needs each felt himself now capable of understanding and meeting satisfactorily.

It was then that Philip Sterner had married, and that John Wendell Cox had adopted the double rôle of intellectualist and hedonist.

A telegram was properly dispatched to old Phil to the effect that John Wendell would arrive in Spring Lake that afternoon, and John Wendell enjoyed

to the utmost the astonishment that would be created in the Sterner household by its arrival.

When he was comfortably settled in the train, he again read Ann's letter. The sinister note had long since died away. He read into the letter only a certain girlish dismay and becoming modesty. She was clever and undoubtedly had guessed something of his feeling for her in the last few months. Any woman, the right kind of woman, and particularly one as singularly alone in the world as Ann, must needs be a little overwhelmed when it came to facing a big issue like marriage. She had seen that a proposal was imminent and had fled, to face the matter squarely and frankly, and to save him the unpleasant part of witnessing her in the throes of the process of making up her mind. It was decidedly commendable of her. And yet—he recalled the blue eyes as they looked at him that last day—there had been a suggestion of brooding reserve in them that he could not quite fathom. He felt the blood begin to pound in his veins at the warm image of her and resolutely he turned to his newspaper. The week stretched before him damnably long!

CHAPTER IX

PHIL was at the station to meet him, the heartiest welcome in his kindly grey eyes and outstretched hand. He was a little stouter, but John Wendell set it down as really becoming. It gave him a sort of comfortable look. An easy car was waiting for them.

"There's a short cut through the pines. What do you say to walking it? We'll send the bags over in the machine."

It was all wonderfully cool and green in the woods. The pine needles muffled their footsteps and a restful calm pervaded everything.

Philip looked critically at his friend. His devotion to John Wendell amounted almost to hero-worship, and time and the seeming estrangement had diminished nothing of his ardour. He looked at the slim boyish figure beside him.

The same brown skin! The eyes that burned into one!

"What did you come for, John Wendell?" he asked.

"Just this!" and the tawny eyes took in almost passionately the cool green about him and then rested with an almost hungry yearning upon his friend. Philip put one arm on his shoulder with a sense of having recovered something quite dear to him. They walked in silence the rest of the way.

The Sterner place evinced quite easily the prosperity that had come to Philip in the last few years. It was a two-story bungalow with a variety of comfortable wings and long, low porches that made at once for coolness and relaxation. A clump of shrubbery to the left confessed a tennis court in the midst, and, farther down, a tree-bordered drive glimpsed a small lake with picturesque boat house perched on the bank. So much John Wendell took in at a first glance.

Mrs. Sterner was waiting on the terrace for them; her greeting was quite easy and betrayed no surprise at the extraordinary visit. She was in white which brought out to the best advantage her dark hair and athletic build. John Wendell had remembered her vaguely as a sort of school-girl creature, prone to little hats at peculiar angles and big earrings. He marveled at the transformation.

"Tea before you go to your room, John Wendell?" she queried and they smiled at each other. By her ready use of Phil's name for him she was showing her acceptance of him at Phil's valuation.

"By all means!" he answered and as they sipped their tea and chattered there was a comfortable illusion in the minds of all that this particular threesome was an institution of long standing.

In the midst of things there arrived with a flurry and a big St. Bernard dog Philip Sterner Junior, a mite of seven with serious big dark eyes and a tendency to ask queer questions at odd times. This concrete example of

Philip's fatherhood tickled John Wendell inordinately; and, when the youngster showed unmistakable signs of naughtiness in regard to an accumulation of sweets, which he laid up for himself behind an Oriental sofa pillow, John Wendell was obliged to withdraw, lest his mirth interfere with the serious discipline that must necessarily ensue. It was all so very human.

"Any more?" he asked Philip as they went into the house, leaving the culprit, still dogged and not at all sorry for his indiscretion, to the argumentative influence of the mother.

"Two little girls, three and six. They're in the nursery. You'll see them in the morning."

"Why didn't you ever tell me, Phil?" They looked at each other straight for a moment.

"Fact is, John Wendell, I had always thought your attitude towards the serious things of life—marriage, children and that sort of thing—a flip-pant one. I wronged you, that's all. Dinner at half after seven. Do as you please in the interim; that's the code here."

Left alone John Wendell sat down to think. He was in a receptive mood. He had come out here with a mind purposely left open to take in new impressions, and these new impressions were fast crowding upon him. But—and herein lay the point of debate—he had sensed in that walk over in the woods with Phil, and in the informal party on the terrace, a latent sentimentality. John Cox had always been inexorable in his stand against anything pertaining to the sentimental. He hunted it out relentlessly and surely in books and dramas and people. You couldn't deceive him. If it were lurking anywhere he trailed the scent and ran it down and chivied and worried it, or dragged it triumphantly with a yelp into the open and limbed it savagely.

But now, what under the heavens was he to do? To remain and scoff were incompatible with his position as guest. He felt a tremendous desire

to run away and then of a sudden a still keener desire to stay, face the music, get that sentimentality in its most attractive garb, here in his friend's charming household, court it perhaps just a little—not too much—and see what there really was in it. And as he sat and watched the feathery clouds floating gently in the blue sky, and heard the faint breeze rustling the trees he gave himself up deliciously, languorously to his new idea. Why not? He smiled. Perhaps the great world that he had spent his days in scoring so savagely was right—the great world that made so clamorously for McCormack records, that was still requesting *Un Peu D'Amour* in the restaurants, that great world of keepsakes and photographs and pretty conceits in general.

His thoughts flew back to Ann. No sentimentality there; he had determined that at the outset. Theirs would be a union that made for wonderful reality and glorious freedoms. He lingered on this for a while.

Edith's voice drifted to him from one of the rooms below. She was singing in a contralto voice and John Wendell could just picture old Phil sitting somewhere comfortably near by and watching her. He shut his eyes and let the tones, softened by the intervening distance, pervade his senses. Yes. Why not? He lit a cigarette and settled back with a luxurious sigh for a brief rest before dressing for dinner. Life and love! That is all ye know and all ye need to know. He smiled to himself. It was all so infinitely, marvelously wonderful and lazy and insidious and sentimental!

John Wendell did do as he pleased, following up his view of pleasing melancholy and incipient sentimentality, and the week-end easily blurred into a full week.

"John Wendell's at a crossroad," Philip had confided to Edith in the beginning. "Leave him alone and things will come out all right in the end."

So in the morning, when Philip was working in the library and Edith was

looking after household arrangements, John Wendell wandered about in the pine woods or lay flat on his back in the bottom of a canoe and let himself drift in the shade of the big trees that overshadowed the little lake. There was a rush of confused thoughts in his mind at first, but gradually things had straightened out and shaped themselves into the tremendous conviction that his previous attitude toward life had been all wrong. He had dodged big issues always; he had treated the serious things that make for life superficially, flippantly.

Flippant was the word that Philip had used to characterize him, and the word had stuck in his mind and tormented him ever since. He reviewed quite mercilessly his whole career, dwelling particularly on the last eight years of it. The faint exotic perfume used by the woman, his latest love, seemed to drift to him on the spring breeze, and was symbolic of the artificiality of all of his relations with women in general. He found it intolerable; it sickened him.

Then his mind came to Ann—Ann with her yellow hair and clear, frank eyes, and he felt refreshed. He wondered where she was this week; her note had been so vague. Perhaps she too had pined, at this most critical moment of her young life, to get back to the heart of nature. She, too, no doubt was somewhere out in the cool green of the woods or at the seashore, watching the ebb and flow of the ever restless ocean. So he dreamed of her and drifted.

Next time they would go together; and at this the blood choked back to his heart and left him strangely unstrung.

He had been duly introduced into the nursery regions and found two little feminine particles, already of decided personalities and temperament. A romp resulted in complete exhaustion on his part, but he was fortunately rescued by Edith before the mites had carried the exploitation of their new playmate too far.

His relations with Phil Junior got on apace. Phil showed him, after swearing him everlasting promises never to tell anyone, his favorite dandelion bunk. He extracted a dead snake from the recesses of a very sagging pocket and exhibited it to his new friend with swelling pride. He discussed quite seriously his going to Yale as an event quiet imminent. He even let John Wendell do a little whittling with a new knife which was his latest pride.

CHAPTER X

So the time slipped away, and John Wendell felt himself a subdued, chastened individual. The night before he was to leave, the discussion turned to business. Philip had purposely avoided the subject before, thinking it best for John Wendell to keep away from the cares and worries of his New York existence.

"I have a busy month ahead," John Wendell said. "You knew, didn't you, Phil? that we'd at last taken over *Le Monde*? There has been much litigation for a year and a half, but matters are all straightened out now and the deal is closed.

The men looked at each other thoughtfully for a long time.

"Poor Billy!" sighed Phil. "You were in London that year, John Wendell, and escaped all the horrible details of the affair, but for us who were in town and had to face it—" He shuddered. "I remember them yelling it on the street corners as an extra."

"Oh, Billy Marston!" interposed Edith softly. "You three lived together for awhile, didn't you?"

The two men looked at each other, their eyes full of the memories of those earlier days.

"Billy was always next to you, John Wendell," said Philip simply.

The suicide of Billy Marston was a topic John Wendell had always refused to discuss, for the simple reason he had always refused to think about it. He had said once with his usual cool decisiveness, "But we don't commit sui-

cide these days. We merely do something bizarre—grotesque. That's the spirit of the age." No wonder he had felt himself unequal to the facing the problem of his friend's violent death. Fortunately, the circumstances of his being in London that year had saved him the obstructiveness of the brute fact. But now, here with Phil, it was different. He felt that he wanted to talk about poor Billy.

The candles with their yellow shades seemed to comfortably shut in the three of them in a circle of mellow light. The rest of the dining room was dim almost to shadow. Phil had brought out some special Burgundy—old Phil always had been a connoisseur in that particular line—and that, too, had had its due effect. John Wendell felt strangely communicative.

"There was a woman?" he asked.

"Oh, yes! Inevitably so!" answered Philip. "Ruth Hilton, a young actress, who sprang into prominence over night. A mad love affair—reckless extravagance—speculation with the firm's funds and then suicide!" He shook his head.

"I wonder—why didn't Billy marry her?" said John Wendell thoughtfully. "He was the sort to do it."

Philip shrugged. "Marriage might have interfered with her stage career. Our managers are fairly particular, you know. The nuptial bond could never weigh against a season on Broadway."

"And what became of her in the end?" said Edith, her eyes softly aglow with sympathy as she listened. "I saw her once in her last play—her only play, I guess. She was very beautiful, rather the winsome sort."

"I don't know," answered her husband. "She sank quite out of sight. Did you ever see her, John Wendell?"

"No. I think she created her furor and enjoyed her little day while I was in London. Poor Billy!"

"Poor girl!" interposed Edith quickly.

John Wendell looked his surprise.

"I hope she is working out her salvation by making some other man happy."

she continued. "A home and children—why not?" She faced John Wendell squarely.

Philip smiled.

"Edith has theories," he said.

"A woman forgives a man his past." she smiled into her husband's eyes.

"Have your confessions been quite thorough, Philip?" laughed John Wendell.

"Quite, old man. I presented Edith with a card catalogue of all past indiscretions the Christmas before we were married."

"But, seriously," said Edith, "I often wish I could have boasted a past so that Phil could have had the supreme pleasure of forgiving me. For after all, the love for an erring one is the love that passeth all understanding."

She was very much in earnest, and as John Wendell looked at her, aglow with her beautiful theory of forgiveness and sympathy, the thought flashed through his mind, "That is the woman I set down as of drab personality!"

To do him justice the tribute he paid his hostess was quite sincere. Though he might be a bit skeptical as to whether or not Edith would actually fold an erring sister to her bosom, he gave her due credit for her theory.

Dinner ended shortly after, and they all strolled out on the terrace. Edith left them fairly early.

"I am tired," she said. "Besides, you two will want a last long talk about old times."

She sat on the arm of Phil's chair, bent over and kissed him simply. The pale light of a young moon was about them, lighting up the gardens and the lake, lighting up the faces of the man and woman as they looked upon each other with infinite contentment. John Wendell Cox turned away.

The two men sat and talked: conversation was desultory. John Wendell had his eyes fixed on the jagged irregular outline of the trees, black against the moonlit heavens. Philip watched his friend.

"It's a woman, isn't it, John Wendell?" he asked at length.

"Inevitably so!" quoted John, recalling Phil's words at the dinner table.

"Aren't you getting a little weary of your amours?"

"Oh, as for that—" a sweep of the fine nervous hand dismissed the topic as unworthy of discussion. "This is different. I am going to ask her to marry me to-morrow—"

Philip showed his surprise. "Tell me about her."

John Wendell stated his case. His clear tones belied the tumult that he felt rise within him at the mention of Ann. The blood pounded in his veins, but he steered his course with forced calm to the end of his story.

"You see, she's the right sort," he added when he had finished.

Philip pondered a while. He gave a fairly shrewd guess at what was rife in his friend's heart, as he caught the warmth in his eyes. He knew that this was the turning point in a life that he loved, and yet he felt helplessly outside, like a bystander, capable only of making fatuous comments on the situation being enacted before his eyes.

He had been very close to this brilliant young spirit in the past. He had recognized and responded to, with a sensitiveness few men are capable of, his friend's keen alertness and knife-like intelligence, and he had cared for him in proportion as he admired. He had watched John Wendell's career the last few years a little sadly; it seemed to him the big thing John Wendell was capable of doing was being postponed too long. He had set this down as due perhaps to the irregularities of his private life, reports of which occasionally drifted to him. Now Philip realized that, in connection with a nature as intricate and intense as John Wendell's, marriage might be either a tremendous disaster or a happy solution of difficulties. He had to admit to a brooding uneasiness, as he faced the question.

John Wendell continued: "I see now my attitude towards life has been all wrong—superficial. I want just this sort of thing," and his eyes took in the house and the grounds and his friend,

sprawling in a great easy chair. "And I want," he added with a certain finality "the companionship of a good woman." He smiled a little at this. He meant what he said thoroughly, but his way of expressing himself and the tentative melancholy in his voice tickled him inordinately. He glanced at Philip whose dead seriousness restored his equilibrium at once. There was silence for a while.

"But," put in Phil at random, "It isn't the goodness that counts. It's the woman, the personality, the spirit of her. I suppose," he added more slowly, "you think that marriage makes for prudery and narrowness of outlook. On the contrary, I have never seen things more clearly—the relations of life—than I have lately. Goodness! Purity! What do they amount to? No one is innocent these days; the circumstances of our creation bar that; virtue is an accident. Yes, I mean it. If she has it, well and good. If not—well—the body is finite; love is infinite. What difference does it make? Keep your eye straight ahead on the big facts of existence and the little things fall into place. Edith and I, for example. She happened to be good—pure. But we fought it out over trifles. I was a brute, I suppose, at times—tried to absorb her personality—mould her ideas to mine. I overlooked the fact that a woman was her husband's complement, not his duplicate. She had a habit of wearing earrings, and I let them get on my nerves. And she kicked up a row when she found out Junior was on his way—blamed me. You remember you used to say a woman at such a time was ridiculous. She thought so, too—then. And, oh! don't you see? We lived only in the details of the day and lost sight of the big thing that should have been our lode star—the love we had for each other—the only thing in the world that really mattered. Thank heaven! That's all over now. We've worked out our destinies and you see us as we are. Ah! John Wendell, if one man's experience can help another—take my advice—don't bank on good-

ness and virtue and all that cant—but on the love that has drawn you two together.”

Philip poured forth his words and they carried weight from the very confusion of their utterance.

“You’re too brilliant a man to go on the rocks as Billy Marston did, or, worse still, to straggle out your existence in the sandy deltas of a fashionable boudoir. Get down to it. Face facts. Drive life into a corner and wrestle with it. Marry the girl; love her; stick to her; and forgive her if she ever needs it. And then, John Wendell, some day you’ll do the something big I’ve always expected of you. Cut the sybarite and be the man.”

John Wendell listened, no longer with the slightest inclination to smile. He was surprised, absorbed, astonished. Instead of the smugness and impregnable conventionality he had always set down as an inevitable attribute of the happily married man he was face to face with a doctrine that was, from its breadth and depth, overwhelming even to his excessively daring mind.

The realization flooded him that Philip Sterner had forged ahead these last few years and that he, John Wendell Cox, had been left hopelessly behind. By the steady gleam of his friend’s light he saw himself as tawdry. Sentimental, old Phil might be, but he was big; and John Wendell measured quite fully his own pettiness by comparison. He had been viewing life as through a glass darkly; now for the first time he felt the palpableness of existence, the desire to get down deep into the heart of things where the great arteries are beating and pulsing.

To face every issue! To take the aches with the ecstasies! To live and love and work! And against the confused and ever shifting background of the passion of his thoughts there stood out clear of outline the figure of Ann Winthrop.

Philip had stopped speaking, and they sat for a long, long time merged in thoughts that were freaked by the lights and shadows of the moonlight night.

They said little when they separated but they felt very close together. John Wendell, from his own window, watched the moon pale in the heavens and set down life as a queer game after all.

CHAPTER XI

JOHN WENDELL COX slept but little when he did go to bed. He was keyed up to the issues of the day that he watched dawn slowly. The mists of the previous night were scattered. He was eager for the encounter with Ann, which he deemed the first step in his new existence, and he felt young and strong and confident in the happy working out of his destiny.

It was with real regret that he said good-bye to the little group gathered on the terrace to wave him farewell. He promised Junior a new knife with four blades, patted the babies, shook hands warmly with Edith and Philip and was off. The motor swung through a road fringed with drooping trees and he felt the exhilaration of the early morning air in his blood. It was spring; spring everywhere, and the spirit of the woods stayed with him even after he was shut into the closeness of the train.

But as New York loomed ahead his spirits flagged a bit. He knew well how the work accumulated at the office during his fitful absences. The week for making up his magazine was upon him, and the task of straightening up the affairs of *Le Monde* and launching it once more under happier auspices assumed larger and larger proportions the nearer he approached it. And always about that undertaking was the shadow of the gloom of Billy’s death. *Le Monde*, at the time of the tragedy, a year and a half before, had gone into a receiver’s hands and Mr. John Wendell Cox had but just succeeded in buying a clear title to it. He was actuated in the doing of this by practical purposes; for the magazine when managed rightly was a paying proposition. But there was also a sentiment involved which Mr. Cox admitted only reluctantly to himself.

Le Monde had been Billy Marston's great obsession. He had toiled and struggled against the heaviest odds until he had finally established it on a sure footing. It had been his idea, his creation, and he joyed in its success with all the ardent enthusiasm of his young being. John Wendell had been unable to stand by and see the result of his friend's efforts pass out of existence, so he had made a bid for *Le Monde* immediately upon his return from London. His friends had voted it a clever move. The building in which *Le Monde* was established was 'way down town and had been bought by a syndicate which was holding it as an investment. The whole thing had fallen gradually into the ruin that inevitably ensues from disuse, and Mr. John Wendell Cox felt a strange dread when he thought of stirring up the dust of the many months that had passed since the tragedy.

Ah well! He would see Ann first; and the problems connected with *Le Monde* were soon lost sight of in this thought.

CHAPTER XII

He telephoned her immediately upon his arrival at the office. She, too, had just returned. She was a little tired. Why not make it that night instead of the afternoon? Her voice had a weariness that worried him.

He worked doggedly all day, had a hasty dinner and then reported at the little apartment.

Ann was all in clinging black, which emphasized the fragile figure and threw into relief the gold of the hair, and she undoubtedly looked fagged. He felt unduly tender as he held both her hands and noticed the violet shadows under the eyes.

She attempted to draw away, but he held her quite firmly.

"Ann," he said, and his voice was tremulous though the eyes were steady as they looked into hers. "I want you to marry me."

An instant's flash of joy lit her face,

followed by a look of infinite terror and abject hopelessness.

For a second she let him draw her close and he felt her trembling against him. Then she broke from him wildly and burst into an agony of sobs. It was all so unexpected that he was, for the second, quite stunned. The slight figure had crumpled up on the divan, and she was torturing herself in the attempt to suppress her emotion. He went over and sat down beside her as she lay there.

"I never asked anyone to marry me before," he said half humorously, "but I must confess this is hardly my idea of the culmination of a romance."

The bantering tone was an effort; he felt his own nerves sadly frayed.

She turned a little and smiled through her tears. He thought for a second the clouds were breaking.

He touched the yellow hair with the tips of his fingers, and a quick flush that surged into her pale face registered the unfailing magnetism of them.

He put one arm about her with the keenest sense of the perilous intimacy of it.

"Ann, what is it?"

Then seeing the slender frame again aquiver he tried to ward off the impending sobs by a straight drop into the casual.

"I shall have to work hard this week—pay with compound interest for my holiday. We've taken over a new magazine."

"What?" she demanded with a quickness that startled him.

"*Le Monde*. Billy Marston and I—"

And then another storm of sobbing seized her. He felt himself in the presence of an unseen force that he felt powerless to combat. He rose, went to the fireplace and watched her tenderly. The woman, cool, capable, of matchless poise whom he had pictured as presiding over his house had never had half the strange lure and potent appeal to him as the sad little figure on the couch.

"Do you wish to be alone?" he asked quietly.

She assented mutely.

"I shall come back to-morrow." He took his hat and coat and then hesitated. "One thing, Ann, I think you owe me. Do you love me?"

"Ah, yes—yes—yes!" she cried frantically.

He stooped down, quickly kissed her on the forehead and left her. He was baffled, puzzled, saddened—but his senses, quickened by the contact with the golden hair and the warm touch of the body across his arm, were mercilessly alert.

He closed the door softly and went out into the night. It was beginning to rain and there was a faint distant rumble of thunder.

"To get drunk would be something of a satisfaction," he muttered with a faint gleam of amusement in his eyes as he stood uncertain whether to call a taxi, or to plunge into the black night regardless. "It's all so damned different from what I expected!"

He had keyed himself up to heroics, had felt the capacity within him of at last living life in the large, of dealing only with the big things, and then—well—a woman's hysteria was the first thing to present itself, and here he was running away with a fearful realization of his own impotency in the handling of it. It was all very absurd, he told himself, and yet the humor involved in the situation was of too sardonic a nature not to leave him decidedly uncomfortable and apprehensive as to the working out of it all.

Perhaps Ann was unwell, and a night's sleep was all that was necessary to quiet her nerves and bring back a proper perspective. Or perhaps—and this solution seemed the more probable the longer he dwelt upon it—she had heard rumors of his relations with other women and had judged him capable of attempting something of the same sort with her. He recalled a certain evasiveness in her attitude toward him when he attempted to strike the personal note, a strange frightened look that would startle in the blue eyes and then settle down into a brooding depth. His proposal, brutal in its direct import, had

slashed across these shadowy doubts and suspicions that had been clouding her thoughts. Her sensitive mind, strained to delicate tension, had been unable to sustain the shock of the tremendous relief, with the natural result of a scene and tears. It was all quite simple as he looked at it now, quite simple and inevitably feminine.

He stood still in the rain and the darkness as the image of the palpitating little figure on the couch rose before his eyes. He loved her with the best and the worst that was in him and she loved him. The shiver that passed over him belied the smouldering gleam in his eyes. He turned up his rain coat collar and put his hands in the pockets.

A jingle of something brought a new thought. The keys of the *Le Monde* building had passed into his possession that day. Why not make a night of it down there?

CHAPTER XIII

JOHN WENDELL COX was too highly strung to ever sleep at the time of any crisis without the assistance of drugs. He had the good sense, however, to use them very sparingly, having seen the dire ravages caused by excess in the case of many of his friends. A favorite method of his, when he felt himself about to come into the weary thrall of insomnia, was to read all night, or write persistently till dawn, with the happy anticipation of the utter oblivion that must necessarily come the next day as a result of complete brain fag. The sleep with which he was rewarded after these intellectual debauches was of the sort to delight the most exacting sybarite. So now, he was perfectly confident that he could not sleep and he hated to trust the material man of him very far, with his nerves unstrung and his senses quite ruthless in their demand.

The solution of the difficulty offered by finding the keys seemed a happy one. There was doubtless a janitor in the building.

He turned to get his bearings and

found he had wandered far afield. It was raining harder and harder and the thunder still rumbled threateningly. The street lights gave an irregular eyrie light through the steady downpour and there were few passersby. A flash of lightning, a little more vivid than the others, cast a momentary shimmer over everything; then was gone. He passed on. It was all so different from the carefully protected limousine existence he had led the last few years.

He found a subway. It was just nine o'clock. He turned his attention to the other passengers, huddled wetly in their corners—clods without a spark—and he wondered what life meant to them. What could it mean? Day after day of sullen brutish existence, that was all! Their dull eyes met his keen scrutiny blankly.

He reached his destination. It was still raining and the dense blackness of the absolutely deserted streets of this downtown locality had in it something almost sinister. The dank chill of the night had struck into him sharply by now. John Wendell Cox huddled the more into his overcoat and wished heartily that he had not come.

He rang a bell which clanged dully through the building. He listened shivering to the echoes as they died cheerlessly away, and then rang more persistently. A shuffling of feet at last proved to him his efforts were not in vain, and an old man of sodden countenance and evil eye looked out at him.

He explained his errand, realizing now for the first time how odd it was, and the old man let him in reluctantly.

They stood a second in the deserted hall, which was lighted only by a flickering candle, held unsteadily in the old man's hand. Their shifting shadows hovered gruesomely above them. The fearful loneliness and dead stillness of the place and the night started strange thoughts in John Wendell's mind.

"And—you live here?" he asked curiously.

The old man nodded dully.

"Alone?"

"Naw!" He pointed sullenly with

his thumb to the passageway leading to the back of the building.

John Wendell Cox started as he caught the face of a woman peering curiously at him out of the dirty shadows.

"Oh!"

At this the woman came forward. He guessed readily that money would speak most forcibly to her, so he gave her some.

"I came to look over the office upstairs. I had forgotten about light. Have you, by any chance, an extra lamp or some candles?"

She clutched the money greedily, nodded and shambled off, returning with a lighted lamp, a candle stick and two candles. She gave them to the old man and then watched distrustfully as the two started up the stairs.

John Wendell unlocked the door of the outer office.

"Did you know Mr. William Marton?" he asked.

"Naw," came again the answer, and the old man settled back into that state of dull lethargy that seemed to spell out his existence.

"That will do," and John Wendell Cox dismissed him generously. "Don't wait up for me. I shall work late. I'll let myself out. Good-night."

CHAPTER XIV

FACING the door, he listened to the dreary foot-steps till they had passed away, with his eyes on the faint glimmer of the light. Then when the dead, still silence rested heavy about him again, he turned quickly and took in to the full the utter desolation of the scene before him.

The air was close and there was dust, dust everywhere, on the desk and tables and chairs. It shivered down from the walls and ceiling as he took a step or two, and he seemed to breathe it into his lungs. He took the lamp and hurried down the dark length of the room, freaked with fitful light and shadow, disclosing at every strangely echoing step more dust laced with spider webs,

and heaped-up reckless confusion.

A pile of magazines caught his eye. He uncovered one and felt a strange nervousness in the handling of it. And there were newspapers everywhere, the black headlines of which seemed to start out through the dust of years and strike his consciousness. His vivid imagination peopled that long room again—the clerks and stenographers busy with their morning tasks. And then, the awe-struck hush when the news came, followed by confusion and morbid curiosity and disorganized activity in general. He could see the little groups clustered together and hear a woman's name passed from mouth to mouth; and then alarm fastened upon all as the financial situation became discussed and the realization came that *Le Monde* must close down. Oh! it was only natural that each should see the disaster only in its bearings on his own little world; but as John Wendell Cox saw the tragedy looming up through the dust of eighteen months, the terrible uselessness and pity of it all brought him an agony of protest.

He seized a newspaper and passed into the inner office. The lamp cast a fitful light over everything. There was a disused typewriter by the desk. John Wendell ran his fingers unthinkingly over the keys; the resulting click was as a goad to his overwrought nerves and he nearly dropped the light. He put it down unsteadily and attempted to open a window. As he drew in a breath of fresh air he realized the storm, which he had forgotten for a while, had broken in full force. The heavens were slashed with the streaks of lightning and the thunder was almost continual. He sat down at the desk and tried to steady himself.

The dull faces of the people in the subway kept coming into his mind, and he could see quite clearly the old janitor and his wife huddled in the kitchen somewhere in the dreary depths below. Then, athwart this ever shifting unclean mass of sodden humanity, stood out the image of Billy as he had seen

him last, at a dinner the night before he had left for London. He could see the slouch of the tall athletic figure and the eager grey eyes. He remembered Billy as always gesticulating easily, talking, planning the big things he was to do for the masses, for Billy Mars-ton's life and interests were inevitably bound up with those of the people of the slums. His father had been a settlement worker and he had inherited from him his love of all humanity. He had created *Le Monde* in his own image—a magazine of culture and cleverness, that attracted and charmed and then presented a few home truths about the poor, with so sure a stroke and so boundless a sympathy for the subject treated, that the reader was caught unawares and became a convert to the cause without a struggle. Billy had managed to strike the happiest of mediums between the sleek periodical that caters to and amuses the over fed and the aggressive socialistic blunderbus that serves only to provoke unrest and anarchy among its readers.

John Wendell Cox found himself following step by step his friend's brilliant career. Of the last year of it he knew little definitely; but he knew enough of human nature in general to realize that Billy would be an easy victim to the schemes of a fascinating woman. The mad infatuation, extravagance, and final speculation, made with supreme confidence that the deal would "have to come out all right," followed each other with natural sequence.

A loud clap of thunder startled him. The light flickered and as he put out his hand to turn it down he found himself trembling. The shade flapped and the shadows of the big packing boxes loomed grotesque and gruesome. One hovered directly over his head with jagged, irregular outline. Another clap of thunder and then the steady downpour of the rain upon the roof! He found himself crumpling the newspaper in his hand. He spread it out, dusty and yellow and torn, and read deliberately all the harrowing details.

There was a picture of Billy firing the

first ball in a newsboy's baseball game—the newsboys' home on Fourteenth Street had been his special province—and there was a picture of "the woman involved, whose stage name was Ruth Hilton," but that was badly torn and meant nothing to him.

But as he read, the thought came to him that perhaps this was the big thing he could do, carry *Le Monde* along the same lines that Billy had laid out, do something for those sodden, dull-eyed creatures he had always dismissed with a shrug as the "great unwashed."

He had planned to revive and run *Le Monde* along the lines of his own rather superficial, comfortable magazine, which now seemed startlingly inadequate as a vehicle for a mind as keen as he knew his own to be.

And for the first time since he had entered the building he let his thought dwell on Ann. He had found out but lately that she spent two afternoons a week in an East Side Club House, teaching the youngsters to sing. It had surprised him at the time and he had faintly disapproved, but she had refused to discuss the subject. He recalled the look in her eyes when she had said, "You are wasting your energies;" he knew of a certainty she would approve this scheme.

His new idea possessed him and he threw off for a second his nervousness. He opened the office desk—Billy's desk—and the rumble of the top as it rolled back sounded dead and echoed drearily. The lightning seemed to have spent itself; there was now only the patter of the rain on the window. The man rose and looked out, across the wet roofs and up into the blackness of the sky that seemed to press down heavily upon the earth, stretched helplessly beneath it. He felt a strange, black, unseen something hovering over him and again he found himself trembling violently.

He braced himself and sat down at the desk. It was in perfect order. He went through all the papers sketchily; he found it impossible to dwell sanely on any one thing, for the spirit of his

friend seemed to hover in the shadows and the dust, and he had a violent desire to hurry over things and get away from the close oppressive air, out into the night.

He unlocked the side drawers. From one he drew out a number of photographs, carefully tied together and a package of letters. There was the faintest suggestion of perfume that had clung to these sad little relics through all the decay and dust of the eighteen months. John Wendell Cox felt himself in the presence of the woman to whom his friend had sacrificed himself, and there was only anger in his heart.

What was she like? He drew out one of the pictures and looked at it . . .

CHAPTER XV

For hours he sat and stared into the eyes of Ann and into the depths of his disillusionment. Mad, wild resentment and a bitter hatred possessed him utterly at first, with the thought that she'd tricked him hammering steadily in his brain. Yes, she'd tricked him by a carefully worked out, elaborate scheme of artifice and lies. The indomitable will of him lashed itself to exhaustion, and then dragged itself about, wounded and sick and sore.

Then a deeper sorrow for his friend welled in him with the realization that the image of the woman who had been dominating his every move these last few months was the same that had stood out clear cut and with its frank eyes in Billy's mind those last awful hours when suicide loomed as inevitable. His brain seethed and the blood pounded in his heart and he could not see. And then a pitiful weakness followed and he felt himself sinking into an infinite, sickening depth that was yet a hideous unreality. It was like a terrible dream, grim, grotesque with time and space set at naught. In struggling to grasp merely the abstract fact of what had happened to him he felt sanity and reason slipping away.

Then suddenly out of the black depths he saw the blue eyes of Ann bent upon him, sad, brooding, intent, but filled with a strange light of tenderness. "Ann!" the word escaped him and the utterance of it brought relief. What did it matter? What did anything matter? He loved her.

For a moment he got the full force of himself in his humiliation and broken pride. But he didn't care, for the sensible image of her was pressing hard upon him. He floundered about seeking to justify her. She had lied—ah, yes—she had played her little part—but she had paid in the end and suffered.

Words—looks—incidents were tossing about in his mind. "I have fought a good fight—I have struggled; whatever happens, will you remember that? The desire for what I want is stronger than I am." And after all, he himself had forced the cue upon her. "I am tired of city women," he had said the first day he had seen her. And the wistful eyes that had met his—oh, many and many a time, as with an appeal for forgiveness—drew him now out of the depths of despair back into the world of reason . . .

It was getting light when Mr. John Wendell Cox left the office. The east was streaked with pale yellow, and there was that strange hush over everything that comes just before the dawn. As he stepped out into the air he shivered a little.

The keen brilliancy had gone from his eye, the elasticity from his walk. He looked older; it was as if a coarse hand had rubbed off the first bloom that makes for youth and self-confidence and pride.

He went directly to Ann, thinking not at all of the hour. He went upstairs slowly. The door was a little open, as he had no doubt left it the night before. She was lying on the couch fully dressed, her yellow hair in confusion, the face flushed with the agony of weeping that had left her finally almost calm.

"Ann!" and there was a depth in his voice he had always just missed before.

She sprang to her feet with a little cry and then she was in his arms. They clung to each other desperately, as if an unseen force were trying to hold them apart. And then her tears came quietly.

She had tricked him, she had given herself to someone else; but he loved her, so what did it matter? "Love her—marry her—forgive her if necessary—" Old Phil spoke wiser than he knew.

And as John Wendell Cox put his hand on the yellow hair and bent back her head, he wondered if she would have seemed as luminous had the background of her past been less shadowy. He looked deeply into the blue eyes, smiled a little quizzically; then, with a rush of feeling he let quite deliberately flood him, he kissed her.



THERE are only three kinds of women. Those one cannot live without, those one cannot live with, and those one lives with.



ONE knows some women are respectable as soon as one hears their waist-measurement.



A DELICATE MATTER

By Charles Stokes Wayne

IT was not that the colonel had failed to make himself clear. He hadn't in any wise minced matters. It was sheer reluctance on the part of Holcroft to believe. The proposition was so infernally eccentric, so heartlessly inconsiderate, so craftily knavish, that he fancied he must have misunderstood. There were men—characterless creatures, lacking the finer sensibilities—from whom so gross a proposal would have held no measure of surprise. But he had always regarded Colonel Westerhall as the veritable antithesis of these. He had been prone, rather, to idolize him, both as man and officer.

Younger than he by a score of years, Holcroft had come, by reason of repeated evidences of marked favor, to look upon his superior more in the light of an elder brother—a father even—than of a fellow officer or just a friend. Twice, in the Philippines, the colonel had been the means of his salvation. Once he had risked his life to save him from the savagery of a score of Negritos. And once he had, through tactful intercession, spared him the disgrace of court-martial, incidental to an act of gallantry, not military, save in that it involved the wife of an army officer.

There came to Captain Holcroft now, seven years later, a very vivid recollection of these incidents. And they helped in a way both to explain and to clarify. The colonel was asking him to pay his debt. Asking it too, evidently, with the latter episode especially in mind; since gallantry—or an approach to it—of an exactly similar nature was involved.

One couldn't be expected to worm so

vital a secret from an unfaithful wife without first gaining a footing of fairly warm intimacy.

They sat—these two—facing each other across the hearth-rug of the Westerhall library, a mass of glowing embers within the fireplace, and a decanter-decked, siphon-adorned table between them. It was long after midnight, and the spacious old Long Island manor-house, save for their own voices and the intermittent splashing of wind-blown rain against the east windows was as silent as a mausoleum.

The colonel had just mixed himself another drink. He was rugged-appearing, but not big. And he was very ruddy of skin, with close-cropped, light-brown hair mixed with grey. The captain was inches taller, and spare; browned by the sun; dark-eyed; handsome.

There had been a long—a rather unseemly—pause as Holcroft shuffled his memories. To help to cover it he had with some deliberation lighted a fresh cigar. It was not easy, he found now, to choose just the right words in reply. And Westerhall was waiting.

Eventually, holding his cigar poised, he said:

"My dear fellow, I wish I might persuade you against this. I am so sure that you are wrong."

The elder man's manner as he replaced his glass on the table evidenced irritation.

"Then why hesitate?" he asked sharply. "If you are right, all the better. But I must be sure. It is the doubt that gives me no rest night or day. I don't want to misjudge her, God knows. But argument won't suffice. And my own hands are tied. It

isn't in reason to suppose she would answer me in any but one way. To beg you to perform this service for me was why I sent for you."

Holcroft drew long on his cigar. Then he watched for a moment in silence the smoke as he exhaled it.

"And if I refuse?" he questioned with slow deliberation, suddenly fixing the colonel with calm gaze.

"But you won't—you *can't*."

No; he couldn't. That was the devil of it. He knew it as well as did the colonel. There was no escape with honor. But what troubled him most was whether in the demanded fulfilment of the obligation honor might not have to be sacrificed as well.

And now that he was in a corner—now that the primary terms of settlement were mutually understood—he was done with ambiguity. There must be no "post-mortems," no after-reproaches. Plainly his creditor must apprehend the possible, if not indeed probable, cost of collection.

With some abruptness Captain Holcroft rose from his chair. And as he did so he cast his just-lighted cigar to the embers.

"Very well, then, colonel," he said, thrusting his hands deeply into his trousers pockets. "I get you, all right. You've set me a task that, under any other conditions than those existing between us I'd turn down cold. More than that, I'd very promptly tell the party who proposed it a few things that couldn't be classed as complimentary. But in this case I can't do the one, and for very many reasons I'd rather cut my tongue out than do the other."

Westerhall, who had started up frowning at one clause in this little speech, now leant forward and reached for his half-empty glass. And the younger man continued:

"I appreciate how you feel. Jealousy's crazed you. And I'd be a brute not to give you all the sympathy there is in me. But the Germans have a proverb that it's just as well you should remember. It's this: 'Jealousy closes one door, and opens two instead.' You

haven't closed any as yet, I believe. But aren't you opening another when you give me free rein to gain your wife's confidence?"

"You mean I'm putting temptation before both of you, I suppose. Very well. I am. But if she's unworthy I don't care how many doors are opened. One, or a score, it's all the same to me. And if she's worthy, temptation—yours or any other man's—can't change her."

Somehow this speech touched Holcroft as had nothing which had gone before. It showed so clearly how paramount in the mind of the colonel was this test he was so bent upon making. He was willing to stake everything upon it. It was evident that he had reached a point where self-deception was no longer to be tolerated. He must have the truth, however bitter, rather than the recurrent torture of uncertainty. And it was the steadfast hope, the overwhelming desire, on the part of the captain, that he might be the means of giving back to his old friend that coveted marital confidence, which with some abruptness altered his own attitude towards the undertaking. Instead of rebelling, he was now inclined to welcome it. At heart he was an optimist, and he could already see himself bringing to the half-distracted husband that longed-for reassurance which would change him once again into the jolly, light-hearted man of former years.

But the conversation didn't end there. Each now talked with less restraint. They were closer together than at any moment since the captain's arrival. And in the course of this concluding exchange it developed that it was the colonel's intention to leave for Washington in the morning. When he had said "free rein" he meant it in its fullest sense. If Holcroft failed to ascertain the one vital fact in the matter upon which Westerhall's suspicions must stand or fall it should not be for want of opportunity.

And that one vital fact had to do with the paternity of the younger of the two Westerhall children—Minette.

II

THE "colonel's lady" was thirty-five, and didn't look her age. She was slim as a willow wand, yet with the agile grace of a lad—long-limbed and narrow-hipped, with scarcely any visible bust at all. In all likelihood she had taken meticulous pains to preserve in both face and figure the unmarred freshness and soundness of adolescence.

She was a brunette of vivid and contrasting coloring. Her luxuriant hair, black and lustreless in shadow, shone red-brown and glossy in the light. Her eyes, limpidly dark, long-lashed, suggesting an oriental beauty in their faintest slant, looked out from under a low, broad brow of lily-whiteness. Her cheeks seemed to reflect the pink of coral, and her lips, not over-full, but sensuously curved, were as warmly crimson as the wine of the Gironde.

Holcroft had known her, after a fashion, for over five years. And in that time she hadn't changed a particle, either in looks or attitude. From the very first she had accepted him for what he was—an agreeable young man and her husband's friend. Only in a very minor degree, however, had she shared this friendship. And Holcroft, who was perhaps more sensitively susceptible to feminine charm than the average man of his years, though at first inclined to resent her passive aloofness, was ultimately glad. With women flirtatiously inclined and physically attractive he was so weakly unsure of himself. It had been like that at San Miguel when he had got into the trouble from which Westerhall so magnificently rescued him.

And now, after this period of cultivated indifference, he was called upon to make advances, to ingratiate himself, to win a closer and more confidential friendship, to woo even if need be in order to lure her to confession.

With the two children Holcroft had made friends from the first. The boy, Edmund, now nearly eight, was a sturdy little chap, fashioned apparently in

the true Westerhall mould. The girl, Minette, not yet five, was frail, flower-like, with fair hair and brown eyes, and a rather chilling disposition to dreamful detachment.

The captain inaugurated his campaign by adopting a graduated course of more assiduous attention to, and interest in, these little ones. When the weather was fine—which happened to be seldom that autumn—he was wont to take them for walks in the woods, begging them away from Miss Milton, their nursery governess; or to drive them about the country in the little low runabout that was Janice's own. He had got for the boy a miniature set of golf clubs and studiously coached the little chap in their use, interrupted at frequent intervals by the girl who, having developed a sudden interest in autumn leaves, brought them to him one at a time, each of a different shape and hue, and asked him to name them.

And when it rained he read to them or told them stories and their mother, seeing this new side of him, began shortly to shed the armor of her reserve.

In spite of this, however, it was soon apparent to Holcroft that there could be no such thing as rushing her defences. Years of little more than mere acquaintanceship had too strongly entrenched her. It was necessary that he be wary, lest he arouse her to a sense of his secret underlying purpose; and so earn only failure for his pains.

The colonel, impatient for results, had spoken of an absence of a few days, but in confidence had given his friend a week. On the fifth day, however, Holcroft was forced to wire for an extension of time. And the colonel granted three days grace, writing Janice at the same time and begging her on no account to let their guest go until he should be able to return.

Mrs. Westerhall read the letter—or that much of it—to the captain at breakfast. And added:

"I hope you haven't been thinking of leaving us. It would be so dull here without you."

There was not a great deal in the words, it is true. But in the tone and the look that went with them the captain got his first real encouragement.

"I'm sure," he answered quickly, and with a shade more of warmth than he had permitted himself heretofore, "that if you get any pleasure whatever from my presence, my dear lady, I'm not disposed to rob you of it."

"You've been wonderfully entertaining," she rejoined with a smile. "And ordinarily it is so dreary here when George is away. And then, too, you've been so lovely with the children, captain. You can hardly fancy what that means to a mother."

Holcroft, who had lifted his coffee-cup, lowered it again and leant a little forward.

"All I know is," he said with a subtlety of expression which made the fullness of his meaning unmistakable, "that I've been enjoying every minute right up to the full. You see, somehow or other, I never even began to know you before, and the only regret I have is for all the years of the real you that I've missed."

He flattered himself it was a fairly good beginning for so early in the day; and when she lifted her curving, thread-like black brows and smiled again, a little archly this time, and said: "I always thought you were just a man's man," he knew that the way was wide open. So wide, indeed, that he could see almost to the end.

He should have liked to follow it up, right then and there, but at that moment the butler entered; and as breakfast ended Miss Milton, as was her habit, came in with the children.

At luncheon Mrs. Westerhall was not present. An errand had called her to the city, as she explained before going; and she did not reappear until just before dinner.

Holcroft was standing with his back to the fireplace in the great hall, calling himself bitter names in every language he knew—under his breath of course—when a flash of color caught the corner

of his eye and drew his gaze to the broad circling staircase.

She was floating down, it seemed to him, rather than stepping, a radiant figure in a filmy, full-skirted dinner gown the color of flames. And it instantly occurred to him that this was attributable, without doubt, to the awakened feminine flair for coquetry resulting from that brief passage at the breakfast table. Hitherto, though she had dressed nightly for dinner, of course, her costumes had been more or less severe, dark-hued, as a rule, and frequently black.

Conscience-pricked already, the incident inflicted an added torture. Might he not have foreseen, he asked himself, that with every step towards intimacy his sense of degradation must increase? Impulsively, in the beginning, his sympathy had been awakened by his friend's maddening doubt. But George Westerhall was a man, hardened to vicissitudes of all kinds by years of training; and Janice Westerhall was a woman, gently born, sheltered, shielded. Surely there could be no question as to which was the better able to bear punishment. If he might only be sure which way the die would fall! Innocent or guilty? If innocent, then his task, in the light of accomplishment, would be enviable. He would exorcise doubt, suspicion, jealousy, and establish happiness. If guilty—it was unspeakable. It meant woe, disgrace, humiliation, remorse. And not only for one—nor for two. How could he, himself, ever look an honorable man in the face again?

No. He'd have none of it. Better lie a thousand times than run the risk of inflicting such disaster. He'd swear to Westerhall that all was well. He'd invent a circumstantial story with all the convincing details.

With the swiftness of light he had considered and decided, even as he watched her float down and towards him. And the smile with which he greeted her was an honest smile, masking no Judas.

"I am honored," he told her, with a

significant appraisal of her toilette. "I never saw you more lovely."

She feigned surprise, but he could see that she was pleased.

"It's rather garish, don't you think?"

"It's superbly becoming."

That evening saw their last shred of constraint dissolve. He was no longer merely her husband's friend. He was her friend as well. And he was no longer her husband's cat's-paw either. There was nothing vicarious now in his efforts to please her. He had simply come to like her very much for herself. To a certain degree at least he had transferred his sympathies. He was more sorry for her—innocent or otherwise—than he could possibly be for Westerhall.

III

It was the ninth day. The colonel would be home on the morrow. And Holcroft had his story ready. He flattered himself that he knew women—and this woman now especially—well enough to form a correct judgment. If there was ever a faithful wife Janice Westerhall was that. He had had a hundred proofs of it, not simply in words, but in looks, expressions, actions—in intangible ways more to be relied upon by far than the spoken declaration.

It was one of those rare golden days that chance sometimes in late November. He had had the children in the woods again, and for a little he had held the tiny, fairy-like Minette upon his knee. And had he required any additional conviction surely it was there in the sprite the mad father had jealously dared to question. Why her brow—the whole shape of her head, in fact—was the colonel's in miniature. She had a way, too, of drawing down one eyelid and touching the tip of her pink atom of a tongue to her lip in thought that was the colonel's over again. Certainly he would be justified in making the exoneration both full and emphatic.

After turning the kiddies over to

Miss Milton, who had come out for them, the captain had gone off alone, delving deeper into the little forest, reveling in its wealth of color and drinking full invigorating drafts of its pungent bosky odors.

It was some time after four when, again drawing near the road which skirted the Westerhall lawns, he came suddenly to a halt, arrested by what appeared to him at first to be a hunched little furry animal in his path. On closer view, however, he saw that it was an otter cape and recognized it then, instantly, as belonging to his hostess. Puzzled as to how it came there he was in the act of picking it up when once more he was given pause. At no great distance from him, off to his left, someone was sobbing; not softly, nor restrainedly, but with abandon.

It was natural that he should put these two arresting things together and make one of them. Some great trouble had fallen upon Mrs. Westerhall—some heart-breaking sorrow—and she had come out here into the solitude to give it room. His first hazard as to the cause was, of course, the colonel. He had been hurt—killed, perhaps. What else could it be? And then the irony of the situation bore in upon him horribly. Had it been that the husband must die to elicit this final confirmation of the heinous falsity of his suspicion?

A few days ago Holcroft would have hesitated to interrupt so tempestuous a grief. But now it was different. His one impulse was to assuage and to comfort. He was her friend as well as her husband's, and it was fitting that he should go to her. He felt sure that had he been in the house when the tidings came, she would have flown to him. Probably it was to seek him that she had come into the wood.

He found her without the least difficulty, guided by her grief. She sat on a fallen tree-trunk, bent, bare-headed, her face in her hands, her quivering shoulders unprotected from the chill damp of the lengthening shadows.

If she heard him she gave no sign, nor did he speak. Only, very gently,

he laid the cape about her, and after a moment he sat down on the same tree-trunk, not close to her, but a yard or more away.

There, very patiently, and in silence he waited; and after a little, by degrees, her sobs diminished. The first violence of the paroxysms passed. Presently she changed her position. She straightened a bit and, while she still shielded her tear-drenched face with one hand she rested the other on the mossy bark, which lay between them. For a moment it stayed there, unmoving. Then slowly it stretched towards him. And his own met it half way and clasped it.

Still neither spoke. Not until minutes later, when she had dried her eyes—or tried it—on a film of already saturated handkerchief did either open their lips. And then it was she.

"You're so good," she said, with a little catch in her voice.

"If I could only do something," he returned, softly.

"But you are doing something. You've helped me more than you can know. And I was so—oh, so fearfully—wretched."

He wondered if she was going to tell him, or if she fancied he had been to the house and learned, before coming out to her. He was curious to know the cause. But he was not going to ask.

"It's wicked for me to take it this way," she went on after an instant's pause. "I'm so blessed. I've George and—the children."

Then it couldn't have been the colonel, after all. That much was plain. He didn't know much of her family; but he supposed it must be one of them.

"I'm rather a broken reed when it comes to saying things at such a time," he put in lamely. "But I do feel a lot for you, Mrs. Westerhall. If there's anything I can do—any way you can suggest—"

"Oh, if I only dared," she interrupted him, speaking apparently more to herself than to him. "If I could—Oh, do forgive me, won't you? I was

going to say if I could only trust some one!"

"Trust some one!" he repeated, staring at her. "I swear you can trust me. Tell me what it is you want. I'll do anything. Gladly."

"I know it. But—" she hesitated, reflectively.

"Anything, gladly," he repeated.

"But as George's friend," she went on swiftly, "you might feel you owed him a duty."

Holcroft felt himself pale. There was a secret, then! And with a woman's unfailing intuition she had sensed something of the truth.

"But I'm your friend as well," he hastened to assure her.

"More his than mine, though."

"No," he emphasized, "more yours than his—now."

Then her eyes met his squarely.

"Will you send a telegram for me? Not from here. But from some other station—up or down the line—where they've never seen you. And then, do you think, you can forget it? Forget it, just as if you had not done it?"

"I will and I can," was his answer. "I beg you to trust me."

"Have you a pencil and a scrap of paper—a card—?"

"Yes," and produced them.

"Write it for me, please. I can't. My hand trembles so."

And Holcroft scribbled the words as she dictated.

Completed, he read it over to her like this:

"Mrs. Agnes Cr  vier, Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio. Poor, dear Adrian! I can't realize it. The world will never again be quite the same to me. How we loved, and conquered, and suffered, you, dearest, know well. My broken heart goes out to you.—Jane."

IV

HOLCROFT dined alone that night with his thoughts. He had motored ten miles to a station on another branch of the railway to send the telegram—the

mysterious, puzzling telegram. How foolhardy he had been with his promise! Forget it! He could no more forget it than he could forget the promise he had made to the colonel. The promise which in less than twenty-four hours he would be called upon to make good.

All his honest convictions that were to be the basis of his report had been knocked helter-skelter by that enigmatic message. Who was Agnes Crevier? And who was "poor, dear Adrian"? If ever in the world there was such a thing as a confession Janice Westerhall had dictated hers in the words of that wired note of sympathy which she feared to entrust either to a servant or the telephone.

"Mrs. Westerhall has a headache and begs that you will excuse her," the butler said. And so the captain not only ate alone but was condemned to self-entertainment for the entire evening.

For an hour or more, seated before the library fire, he strove to interest himself in books and periodicals. But with small success. Persistently the problem of the day and hour intervened. He smoked cigar after cigar, and at intervals whipped his imagination with Scotch and soda.

Thus aided, the long evening sped more swiftly than he had anticipated. He heard the tall clock in the hall sonorously toll midnight, counting the strokes, and was on the point of rising, when the door at the far end of the room opened to admit his hostess.

His surprise was big, but he dissembled it. He stood up and took a step towards her as she came. He was about to say something expressive of his pleasure, when she checked him by speaking herself.

"I have asked of you the impossible," she said, "and I have come to make amends."

He started to deny this, to reassure her; but she lifted a staying hand, the sleeve of the old rose fur-bordered brocade dressing-gown she wore dropping back to display her perfectly-moulded arm as she did so.

"Since I have trusted you with a lit-

tle," she went on, sinking into a chair, "I must trust you with all. Otherwise, say what you will, you cannot fail to misjudge me."

And there and then, under those conditions, not asking for it, discouraging it, rather, Holcroft heard the story he had been especially invited to that house to elicit.

Very simply she told it, and very frankly, with just enough detail to avoid misunderstanding. She began at the beginning and she ended at to-day. And the beginning was two years before she met George Westerhall, when she gave her love and promised her life to Adrian Crevier.

"We had tiffs at times," she went on. "All young lovers do. Now and then we really quarreled. And once, because we each felt so hurt that each would have died rather than be the first to admit the wrong, we neither saw nor communicated with one another for a whole year and more. And in that year I married George."

It wasn't because of pique, she made plain. He seemed a hero to her. He was Adrian's opposite in every way. Adrian was all romance and poetry, and George was prosaic to a fault, but bold, valorous; a man who "in his time had heard lions roar." It was more admiration than love. And when they had been married but a few months the colonel was ordered to the Philippines. Considering her more than himself he had insisted that she remain in the States. And, remaining, she had one day, in Chicago, met Adrian on the street. It was not a question then of first or last. They rushed together as steel and magnet, and everything but their love was forgotten.

She had learned since how wrong she was. They had both learned it. They had tasted the bitter-sweet of renunciation. For a time they saw each other now and again, more or less formally, and for years they kept up an irregular correspondence.

"But the older we got," she added, "the more we were each convinced that it would be better to forget. You see I

had come to love George very fondly, and I felt that, though my affection for Adrian was now quite innocent, a continuance of even those rare meetings and those few exchanges of letters constituted a form of disloyalty. So—let me see—it's been three years since we saw each other, and the only letters I have had were those his mother wrote—his dear mother, who knew it all and—and understood."

Holcroft was glad she had told him. It wasn't so very terrible, it seemed to him. He had imagined something so much worse. And the telegram appeared to justify it. But she hadn't quite finished.

"Still," she continued, musingly, "I've always wondered—I suppose I shall never cease to wonder—what my life would have been had I married Adrian instead of George. Poor boy, he had nothing, you see, to take my place. I can fancy how with his temperament he must have been tortured. Do you wonder I went to pieces this afternoon? The shock of it. I saw it in the evening paper, you know. 'Accidental discharge of a revolver,' it said."

That is as near as she came to saying what she feared. But there wasn't the least doubt in Holcroft's mind that

her heart told her it was suicide.

He lay awake thinking long after he was in bed. She hadn't said a thing about the children. Were they both Westerhall's? Or were they both Adrian's? From her story, as she told it, either assumption would be tenable. Finally, he fell asleep, still puzzling.

Yet, when on the following evening, together with the returned colonel in the library, his verdict was demanded, he spoke with authority, because he knew.

"My dear fellow," he said with grave conviction in both tone and words, "you may dismiss every doubt. If I were not certain I would not venture to say so. Your suspicions are utterly without foundation. Your wife has no lover but you. Minette is your own begotten daughter."

And Holcroft knew because he had gathered it from a knowledge of women, and from one infallible sign.

All that day Janice Westerhall had not once let her first-born out of her sight. Again and again she had taken him in her arms. And she had kissed him a hundred times. Whereas Minette she had left to Miss Milton, and to him, and to her own dreamful detachment.



WHITE MAGIC

By Agnes Haas Thomas

GONE are beauty and youth and health—
I am alone.

Vanished my dreams of power and wealth—
Little I own.

But when the moon silvers the locust tree,
The ghost of your love remembers me.



THE LETTER

By Achmed Abdullah

AT the shock of noon, just as the great, bronze-tongued bell in the church of Saint-Sulpice boomed out the muffled sob of the mid-day Mass, Jean Honoré Duc de Tourcoing-Belleville crossed the threshold of his bedroom, completely dressed but for the lounging robe of purple velvet nicked with tiny points of dull silver which opened over the pearl-grey trousers and the high, double-breasted waistcoat of white brocade. A minute later he pressed his mouth to the rubber tube which led down into the pantry and gave his order for breakfast—the same order, day after day—"Eggs in *aspic*—a lamb chop *boulangère*—and a small glass of Calvados."

"Coffee, monsieur?" came the faint, sibilant voice of the Gascon valet below; and the Duke's reply, always the same reply, always pronounced after an infinitesimal but, somehow, well defined pause of hesitancy—"No, Robert, no coffee this morning. I shall take my coffee *à la turc*, later on, at the Ritz."

The whole—from the tolling of the bell to the hesitating and slightly plaintive words about the Hotel Ritz—was a ceremony to both the Duke and his man; it was a daily episode, a rite, a quintessence of proper habits, which the Duke performed and solemnized in a heavily hierarchal style. The very way in which he said "*à la turc*," the gently rising inflection—like an Amen—of the final "Ritz," made one think of an aristocratic Cardinal-Archbishop of the old school, magnificent in silken cassock, violet stockings, and emerald ring—

it made one think of seven-branched silver candlesticks and bossed lamps, of jewelled pyxes and enamelled chalices, of sacred monstrosities and splendid, embroidered copes.

A beautiful, faintly melancholic ceremony—and he had performed it daily, without any variation, since his fiftieth birthday, ten years earlier, on which day he had given up his great residence in the Avenue Malakoff and had moved to this little white-washed house in the Rue Férou, in the ancient quarter of Saint-Sulpice, still redolent of Camille Desmoulins and Robespierre and Madame Roland and the Feast of Reason—this small, box-like villa with the walled garden facing the quaint, dying street, left him by his late aunt, Mademoiselle Euphrosyne le Glaivon.

The octagonal, balconied room in which he now found himself and which gave on the flaunting garden, had been his aunt's boudoir. In the ten years since he had occupied it, he had not changed nor moved a single one of its furnishings, its bric-à-bracs, and its many chinoiseries. The simple rug of taupe and claret velvet, the sad, light-grey panelings of carved tulip wood, the more frivolous note in the figures of women and tiny, paunchy cupids surrounded by love trophies which filled the angles of the cornices, the ceiling in Lebrun's best manner, with Titans pursued by the thunderbolts of Jupiter, the fine old enamelled plates framed in dark-green velvet, the Tanagra statuettes, the tortoise-shell boxes, the Buhl table, the cushions covered with sumptuous Byzantine

dalmatics which filled the low divan; even the painted Sèvres vase with its delicate, silvery spray of guelder roses daily renewed—the whole pathetic mixture of old-maid precision and grand-dame coquetry:—no!—he had not disturbed it.

For, as he said one day to his young nephew, the Abbé Jerome le Glaivon, "It is just right, this blending of small pale virtues and small rose-colored vices! A little perverted, a little scornful, a little old-fashioned—and altogether charming. You see, it has been whispered that my respected aunt, Euphrosyne, died a virgin—and, too, it has been whispered that she had many lovers. Perhaps both rumors speak the truth—and, so, if you consider the lessons of my own life, you will agree that this boudoir dots the *t's* and crosses the *t's* of my soul, *hein?*"

The Abbé, being of the younger Faubourg generation whose language is a mixture of Newmarket Heath and of the crass, staccato slang of the Outer Boulevards, belonging, moreover, to that Parisian coterie which has bartered the poignant Gallic humor of de Musset and Scribe for the dull, rough, extravagant wit of Paul Mayol and visiting American black-face comedians—replied, with a shrug of his shoulders, "What drivell! I don't get you," a free translation of his original words—they should be given in French to be appreciated—"*Des rigolades de cet acabit, il s'en passe à la pelle, mon bougre.*"

Still, the Duke was right, and every morning at twelve o'clock sharp the knowledge that he was right came to him afresh: right in keeping this boudoir intact, in letting the pale, dying grace of it permeate his soul and his habits—identical, these two—with its wire-drawn, adroit regularity. And so, as he did every morning, he stooped over the Sèvres vase, lightly touched the silvery spray of guelder roses with a little sigh of caressing content, and walked over to the two-piece Venetian mirror, an-

other relic of Mademoiselle Euphrosyne le Glaivon.

He gazed gravely in the glass, standing a little sideways and looking over his shoulder, following the contours of his face, the outlines of his figure, the Gothic arch of his high insteps.

The Duke of Tourcoing-Belleville was pleased with himself—as he was every morning.

After all, he thought, he had not aged during the preceding night—he was still a good-looking man of the old-fashioned French type: tall and lean but without that osseous, hunger-bitten look of the younger generation who ape the Anglo-Saxon; his silken, fan-shaped beard a greyish brown with hardly a suspicion of henna; full, red lips showing beneath the curled mustache; a broad forehead furrowed by the dark chasm of deep set, cynical eyes; small ears; narrow, pleasurable hands and feet—yes, he was elegant. He was even chic.

Too—and this was the final and most important summary of himself which the mirror gave him—he was tranquil, utterly without nerves; and this calm—a subtle calm, as he himself called it—was neither a racial nor a family trait, but a constructive achievement born of habit and mental diet.

Years ago, ten years ago, to be exact, on the day on which he had moved from the great, grey residence in the Avenue Malakoff to this little villa, he had prudently cleared his mind, his life, his conscience, his thoughts, and his daily acts from all the disturbing social matters connected with a golden mocha spoon, a deck of *ecarté* cards, and a Paquin gown. He had bid a slightly pathetic farewell to the days of his youth and his ripe manhood, which had been shot through with the prismatic diffractions of adventure and excitement. To quote his own words: he had given up vigorously threshing mere straw. Deliberately, on his fit-

tieth birthday, he had decided to be an onlooker henceforth; to retire from the clanking turmoil of Faubourg and Boulevard, to settle down and widen his span of life—and he had carried out this deliberation with a will as cool and dry as a question in the Rule-of-Three.

In the past, he had tasted the honey of virtue and the gall of vice; and he had found both stale to the taste and sickening. He had discovered that the deepest depth of sin is but a shadow, muddy hole in the ground, and that the highest heights of virtue are only the insubstantial limbo created by one's own imagination. Useless, tinkly things—he called them—bad for the nerves, bad for a man's happiness and a man's digestion—a trinity which to him held a sounder truth, from a mathematical point of view than the one mentioned in the New Testament.

To-day his life was an exquisite mosaic of gentle but steely habits logically calculated and carried out with the intention of making each minute a guarantee for the quiet happiness of the entire day. The whole thing was very logical, and his logic was slightly ruthless, pitiless, as one would imagine God's logic to be; for he was a Frenchman of pure blood, with the Frenchman's hard simplicity and single-mindedness, with the Frenchman's coldly ferocious efficiency in personal matters.

Thus, with the help of his valet, he had arranged all his daily acts, from the moment of rising to his mild night-cap of grenadine-aubergine. He looked at his old-fashioned hunting watch—a quarter past the noon hour—just as he thought. Breakfast would be ready in thirty minutes.

That gave him his customary half-hour devoted to a blond Russian cigarette, his correspondence, and a leisurely glance through the morning papers.

They were waiting for him on the left-hand corner of the Buhl table, on

the exact spot reserved for them: his letters and his four newspapers—of four different political complexions. For, being a man devoted to a life of quiet habits, he refused to have the strength of his own political convictions. Nationalist, Royalist, Socialist, Republican: what difference did it make to the Duke of Tourcoing-Belleville? He read the leading organs of all the parties after a prudently arranged system, and he believed in none of their patriotic ebullitions—though at times, when he wished to avoid a discussion in his circle, he professed to believe in them all.

He glanced at the headlines of the *Gaulois*. He wondered ironically but kindly what it would have to say about the latest bribery scandal in the Chamber of Deputies. Then he decided that he would wait with the reading of the news until after breakfast. For one of the Deputies implicated in the scandal was Antonin Thiéroux, a man of whom he was fond, and it would distress him to see his friend's character and reputation mauled and torn by the shrill-voiced watch dogs of the editorial offices. It would impair his appetite and hurt his digestion.

No!—he would read about it after breakfast. Perhaps he would wait until the evening. Perhaps—he sighed contentedly—he would not read it at all. So he discarded the *Gaulois* and the other newspapers with a soft little flip and turned to his correspondence.

There were twelve letters, just about the usual number, and he shuffled slowly the rustling pile. It always gave him a certain, mildly sensual pleasure to touch them, to speculate about their contents—for the sole reason that he knew exactly what the contents would be: there would be no surprise—and to a man of his habits all surprises were disagreeable. There would be most likely a letter from his sister in the Saintonge, an advertisement or two, a few

invitations to the houses of friends and cousins, and perhaps a minutely detailed and easily comprehended report from the excellent man who oversaw his broad, landed estate near Blois.

So, every morning, he experienced the same little thrill when he handled his mail; the negative thrill—for he was a cynic—given him by the certainty that the correspondence would contain nothing thrilling; nothing to jar the nicely adjusted equilibrium of his habits, nothing to spoil his digestion, or to wrinkle his smooth, white forehead.

And then, quite suddenly, as he looked at the third letter in the pile, he paled. He gave a low exclamation of surprise which cut through the quiet old room like the whistle of a whip-lash.

For here was a letter which he could not place.

He picked it up, studying the envelope front and back. It was a simple enough affair: of pale cream linen paper, with a tiny, silver-bossed coronet in the angle of the flap, and faintly perfumed. What was there to apprehend in the fact that he could not place the handwriting? Doubtless he would find inside an ordinary engraved invitation: to a gentleman of the Faubourg from a lady of the Faubourg, since the writing was that of a woman.

He studied it more closely, and it seemed to him that the handwriting was growing vaguely familiar—and vaguely disturbing. But no!—here he was, a man of proper habits and subtle calm, mumming his mind into the speciosities of childish fairytales—how *could* a handwriting be disturbing?

The Duke of Tourcoing-Belleville smiled at himself. He replaced the letter on top of the pile, and he noticed that his right hand was trembling a little. It made him angry. For soon he would eat his leisurely breakfast—the excellent eggs in aspic and the little glass of sharp Calvados

—then his hour at the Ritz—his drive in the Bois—a minute or two at the *cercle*—the great, happy plethora of calm which the whole day meant to him: should he permit this foolish, unknown correspondent to upset it?

He decided that he would break his rule for once, that he would leave the perusal of his mail until later in the day. He walked over to the balcony and looked out. It was a perfect Paris spring day—rose and white and palest lavender—with a warm scent of flowers. Two sparrows down in the garden were nipping at the early tulip's leaves. He watched them—and then, before he knew what he was doing, he turned away from the balcony and walked back to the Buhl table. He looked at the extravagantly slanted handwriting of the unknown letter. Yes!—it was familiar to him. But whose was it?

The Duke felt a drop of moisture on the high bridge of his aristocratic nose. He drew his fine linen handkerchief from the pocket of his lounging robe, unfurled it like a flag, and flicked off the bead of perspiration. He gave a short, constrained laugh.

Then, with abrupt decision, he picked up the letter, or, rather, he flung himself on it fearlessly as on a steely challenge of fate. He inserted his second finger in the loosely gummed flap—he drew his fingers a little to one side—the envelope crackled protestingly—and then he stopped.

The perfume from the creamy paper rose up more strongly than before.

He knew the scent.

Was it *muguet*—or—*coquelicot*—or perhaps *jardin de mon curé*?

No!—it was a different odor, and he seemed to remember it—he seemed to remember it sentimentally.

He told himself that it was ridiculous that he was becoming as imaginative as in the plastic first-times of pap-fed infancy. He would open the envelope and find out once and for all. He drew his finger a little farther be-

neath the flap. There was a dull, tearing noise. Then he stopped again.

He walked to the window and held the letter against the light to see if he could recognize the signature. But the paper was too thick. All he could see was a blur of violet ink; and the Duke let himself drop among the sumptuous dalmatics which covered the divan pillows, and, for the first time in his latter life, he felt unhappy, troubled, undecided.

He glared at the square bit of linen paper as he would at a hated enemy, and then—with utter abruptness—he recognized the handwriting; he recognized the perfume. His heart commenced to beat violently. He sat as immobile as a stone image, his soul torn by a poignant emotion, the letter crumpled in his right hand.

The letter was from Jacqueline—Jacqueline de Roucquebèche—the little doll-like, exquisite, blonde Jacqueline. "Ashes of Roses" he had called her, because of the strange, dull-warm shadows in her hair when the sun struck it. He had loved her, and she had loved him. He had really never loved anybody else—at least not very much, he concluded the thought with that ruthless logic of his.

He had known her only three weeks—three weeks perfumed with love and sentiment and passion. He remembered one evening in winter. It was on the occasion of some ball or other given in the Boulevard Saint-Germain. She had escaped from her chaperon, and she had driven with him through the wintry Bois—wintry and cool, throbbing with the low hum of a sleeping world. The perfume from her corsage had intoxicated him—the same perfume which rose from the letter he held crumpled in his hand—he had kissed her—

Then, one day, a disagreement—a row—hard words over nothing at all. He remembered that he had been in the wrong, but his love was frozen by his pride, he had not given in—

and she had married somebody else.

Whom had she married? Oh, yes—the huge, red-faced Norman, Baron de Crèvecoeur—with his tremendously broad feet and little pig's eyes, with his infernal, jarring Norman accent and his gross Norman greed. He had married the little blonde Jacqueline and had carried her away to his estates in Normandy. And the Duke had never seen her again—

Thirty years ago—no!—thirty-three years ago—

And now she wrote to him—with the same extravagant handwriting, the same strange perfume—and—

Suddenly, the Duke's mentality wrenched itself free from the old, sentimental fastenings. Why did she write him—what did she want from him, he asked himself. She was an old lady by this time, with a grown-up son—he had seen him and spoken to him at the *cercle*, only a few days earlier. Did she want money? Impossible! For the Baron, dead these five years, had left her a large fortune. Political or social help for her son? No! The boy was serious and ambitious. Already he had made a name for himself in the Ministry of the Interior where he worked, and he was well received by All Paris.

What *could* she want from him after all these long years? Why—they were strangers to each other—he and this old lady—the ghost of little blonde Jacqueline who wrote to him from her hidden corner in Normandy. Did she want to revive an affair of the heart begun and ended thirty-three years ago?—The Duke was quite shocked at the thought—it seemed so out of place in the soft, old-fashioned precision of his late aunt's boudoir.

But why had she written—*why*, *why*? Maddeningly, the question came back to him—and he was afraid to open the letter, afraid to find out, afraid to jar the delicate and precise equilibrium of his daily life.

Why—

There was a knock at the door.

Robert, the valet, entered and bowed. "Breakfast is ready, monsieur," he said in a low voice, and the Duke rose. He smiled. Suddenly he made his decision.

Here was Robert—here was breakfast, eggs in aspic, a lamb chop boulangère, a small glass of Calvados. Here was his coffee *à la turc* at the

Ritz, a drive in the Bois, a half-hour at the cercle. Here was calm and peace and happiness—minutely arranged, minutely dovetailed—and a bit of perfumed paper to disturb it—to destroy the work of ten years!

"*Mais non alors!*" said the Duke to himself, and he tore the unread letter into a dozen pieces.



THE PARIAH

By C. V. Hackney

I HAD heard of the man.

In truth, everyone had heard of him. His nefarious doings and misdoings had long been the topic of awed conversation in that little town where he made his home. The residents of this town were a godly people and were duly shocked by the infidelities charged to him. Why, everyone remembers the time he—but we must not speak calumny of the dead.

The man now lay in the silence of his own little room, white, calm, marble-like, for the first time in years free from the darts of those local saints. I had no little curiosity concerning him, for some of his deeds had come to my attention in my travels through that country, and I rather impatiently awaited the result of the autopsy soon to be performed. Having traveled over a large portion of the world and being something of a student of history, I more than half guessed the truth. But the autopsy would tell. And then with the findings of the post-mortem examiners came the staggering truth! The man had brains!



LOVE

By James Shannon

THE girl was wet and bedraggled. Her hair was a soggy mass. Mud spattered her skirt and two buttons of one shoe were unfastened. A rain-drop furrowed a tiny patch through the paint on her cheek.

The man gathered her hungrily into his arms, their lips met in the ecstasy of love, and he murmured adoringly: "My little wet violet!"



THE PIRATES OF VIRTUE

By Paul Hervey Fox

A TAXI-CAB, blundering awkwardly up Sixth Avenue one late November day, had for its sole occupant a young and pretty woman. She had bright, clear features, and eyes which were competent to assume the most extraordinary (and diverse) expressions. A conjunction of pride and caution was most prevalent upon the grey irises; but they were not incapable of softening into pity nor wearing the glint of hard humour. Just now as the taxi puffed and bounded like some obese insect past the old night-court, those eyes, glancing through the window at the dingy structure, betrayed the presence of a keen contempt.

In the Forties the cab swerved around a corner and drew up before an impressive office-building.

The woman dismissed the driver and, disappearing within, took the elevator to the topmost floor.

On a door to the right in the corridor was the simple legend:

B. Finn

The woman, with a significant preliminary knock, stepped into the room and found herself facing a short, slim man with Semitic though not unpleasant features.

"Ah, Vaska, so it's you," murmured Mr. Finn with great suavity of tone to which a burst of gutturals lent an accenting contrast.

Just what profession the mysterious Mr. Finn adorned, it was at first somewhat difficult to say. With his bald, benion head, his sleek smile, his interlocking fingers, he presented an appearance of paternal tenderness. The face, for all its prominent char-

acteristics of race and taste, was not quite vulgar enough to be that of a theatrical manager. Mr. Finn, to the evidence of the shrewd eye, graced a calling of far more refinement.

The woman—whom we may candidly refer to as Vaska, now that the obliging Mr. Finn has disclosed her identity—seated herself, and her amazing eyes took on an expression of irritability sleeping under a blanket of boredom.

"Well, Vaska," said Mr. Finn genially, "I'm glad you've come; very, very glad!"

The repeated adverb on his lips had a curious furry sound, analogous, in a material comparison, to the coarse skin of a peach.

"Why?" said Vaska coldly.

"Ah, my dear—ah!" Gutturals, intended to be placating, here lorded it supreme. "You see, my dear, you see, you're not doing so good. Hey? Of course! In my profession I have never employed men. Ah, no! You pretty ladies, yourselves, is much better. Lilly Spenson, now, what hasn't she done for me? And Madame Grant? *There* is a woman, *there* is one woman. . . . She is a tigress, *hey?* Of course! A tigress! And you, too, are excellent, my dear, but all of you, all of you, are not—"

"Are not what?" cut in Vaska with a voice like a blade.

"Well, you are all good. Madame Grant, she is good, oh so good! But compared with Mrs. Mogridge, you are every one of you children! Her returns is twice as much as yours, oh yes. And why? She has a smarter method. You all play your own

games, but her game is better, see! I have sent girls all over the country what she has gotten for me. To Boston, to Denver, to—oh, all over, yes! But you—you only supply just yourself. Even Madame Grant, good like she is, ain't really not much better. And so my dear, I want to talk things over a little. Trade is not so good. Mrs. Mogridge is the only one. And I want you to—"

His face clouded as he caught sight of the clock. "My gracious! I must get dressed to speak before the Social Betterment Association on 'The Working Girl's Wage.' Is it sufficient? I think it is, speaking from the standpoint of an investigator and efficiency expert. Sufficient for my purposes. . . . Hey? Of course!"

The garrulous Mr. Finn threw a shrug of exquisite humour into his conclusion and bowed Vaska obsequiously to the door.

"Run along, my dear. Try the trains as usual. The six-fourteen is pretty good. Next Wednesday I will see you and finish what I begun to say to-day about you and Mrs. Mogridge. She herself will be there to-night at the station. Then maybe you don't need to have me talk. You'll see. Good-bye, my dear."

Vaska's eyes mingled indignation and disdain as she turned into Forty-second Street and moved down that eternal thoroughfare. She was bound for the great station where, hourly, trains from far places rumble in through the darkness of a tube like neophytes that are blindfolded ere they are ushered into the robbers' cave. Vaska was hurt, hurt at the implication that she was not all that might be desired, and doubly hurt by a pang of jealousy of this Mrs. Mogridge. Vaska had her professional pride, and she liked to think herself bettered by no one in the wiles of her calling. She had not mingled with kindly Mr. Finn's lieutenants, holding herself aloof as if conscious of her finer caste of mind. But she was

now declared to be the inferior of this Mogridge woman!

The determination came over her suddenly to discover Mrs. Mogridge, if possible, and mark her methods. What the lady looked like she didn't know, but she counted herself a sharp enough judge of humanity to pick out a business associate even in a crowd of low commuters. She would watch Mrs. Mogridge and attempt to discern wherein her stratagems differed. Finn must know. He was not likely to be an enthusiast over mere romance—that vivid, gay balloon puffed out with unsubstantial air. Finn wanted *results*; and he got them! Vaska vowed to herself that she would win his approbation, not so much for the sake of the latter as for the sake of humiliating this obnoxious, unknown Mrs. Mogridge.

She entered the station, examining her own methods for the first time with critical eyes. In one particular she was aware that she frankly blundered. While she had successfully killed the protests of her conscience at her own acts, she had, curiously enough, an acid attitude where others were concerned. She would have committed a murder for coppers, and interpreted it in terms of duty; but should someone else merely filch those coppers, she would have restrained, only with difficulty, a shudder of self-righteous horror. The trait had only one advantage to offer in exchange for its manifest disadvantages: it made her feel sweetly virtuous.

Her eyes leapt under feignedly sleepy lids across the huge station, past the information bureau, the innumerable passageways and ticket-booths, through the shuffling crowd, and lighted, by magic chance, upon a single evil face. A woman, silent, watchful as herself, as obviously unoccupied with the distractions of travel, turned a studying gaze upon that moving crowd.

Vaska jumped to a conclusion by instinct.

That tall, ungainly figure, that hard-featured mask with the lean cheeks, sharp eyes, and cold angles, that sardonic, restless scrutiny all pointed to one summary. This must be Mrs. Mogridge, the woman who was her rival, the woman whom Finn had taken occasion to praise so loudly!

Vaska catalogued her carefully, and, at the end, her eyes—versatile as ever—took on an expression of despair. So this was what Finn wanted! It wasn't so much a matter of method as of temperament. This woman was prepared to back up a complete absence of scruples with a complete power of aggression. She hadn't Vaska's grace, youth, or beauty, but she had the soul of a malevolent sirocco. Small wonder she was so successful!

At that moment Vaska noted that the woman was staring in her direction, first at Vaska, then at someone to one side.

Vaska slowly turned her head—then started.

To that side stood a frightened girl. While she didn't wear mittens, her whole apparel, nevertheless, proclaimed her fresh from the country. Perhaps the pathetic attempt of her clothes to play the mime to metropolitan fashions even strengthened her rustic aspect. She was wistfully pretty, and, Vaska thought, quite young. As she stood in a huddle of luggage, looking about her with a panicky air, she made a rather charming picture. . . . And, beholding her with ruthless intent, were two women, two women who were rivals, who were prepared to perform any desperate maneuver to gain the credit of her ruin.

Vaska, in one particular, felt herself better equipped than the hard-featured woman across the floor. *She knew the latter's status, but the latter didn't know hers.* No doubt Vaska was being taken for an urban young matron, sophisticated perhaps, but nothing more. Over that por-

trait Vaska permitted a laugh to lurk in her mobile eyes.

Suddenly Vaska saw her rival moving in the direction of herself and the country-girl. She had to think quickly. This aggressive, grim woman would in another moment represent herself as some boarding-house tout and whisk away with the prize in a wink. Vaska couldn't bear to see such a victory. She wasn't vigorous and decisive herself; she inclined invariably to elaborate overtures, and even in the stress of the situation she couldn't summon up the will to march directly to the country-girl and anticipate the other plotter. Rather desperately, however, she smiled at the frightened little thing.

To do her justice the smile was superb. It was friendly, gentle, and in its pleasant repression, quite perfect. There hid no trace of cold design in its simple appeal. Perhaps that was responsible. In any case, luck came her way of its own volition. The little country-girl, with an unwieldy bag in each hand, came up to Vaska!

The girl was obviously embarrassed. She stammered as she spoke.

"I—I hope you'll pardon me," she said, and her eyes seemed almost ready to fill with tears; "but I don't know anyone here, and I want help. I—"

"Surely!" said Vaska in her most sympathetic manner. "My dear, what can I do for you?"

Never was there such a piece of good fortune as this! Out of the tail of her eye she perceived that her rival, temporarily baffled, had halted, and was watching the proceedings with cold fury.

"Are you a stranger in the city?" she ended gently to the girl.

"Ye-yes," answered the suppliant, opening her eyes very wide. "How did you know? I'm Miss Parden. My name is Sally. I—you see—"

She broke off helplessly and searched for words.

When she spoke again she was calmer. "I didn't know New York was so horrid. I thought I could go to someone just as easy and ask where I could stay cheaply. I— I oughtn't to have come. And George, he said—"

"You poor little thing!" murmured Vaska tenderly. "Of course it's hard on you. I was waiting here for a friend, but I don't really need to wait. First I must see if I can't help you."

She considered a moment in silence.

"The spare bed-room!" she ejaculated ecstatically under her breath; then she added with a little burst: "Why not? My dear, you can come up to my apartment to-night, if you like, and then look around in the morning. How would that be?"

Her seductive words had the desired effect.

Sally clapped her hands together in a *gauche* but charming manner; her face ligated, and anxiety seemed to lift from it like a mist.

"Oh, that would be lovely of you!" she said. "I thank you awfully. And would it be all right if we went right away! I'm afraid I don't want to meet any people just now."

"Of course, dear," said Vaska. "I quite understand. We'll leave directly."

With easy grace she led the way, but her heart was hammering wildly in her breast, and her eyes registered elation. It was such a miraculous piece of luck that she was dreadfully afraid lest something should intervene at this eleventh hour to mar it all.

The hard-featured woman glared at her as she approached.

Vaska tried to return her glare with an answering one, but failed miserably. Yet if her face was not indicative of her triumph, her spirit sang with the lust of that facile victory. She had beaten the celebrated Mrs. Mogridge, defeated her in a fair fight. Vaska was prone to overlook the fact that the elements of chance

were on the side of the angels!

Outside Vaska stopped; looked at a line of waiting taxis.

She was suddenly conscious of a vague feeling that someone was following her.

She turned, but in the seething crowd she could not pick out a particular face that seemed to match her fancies.

"Are we going in an automobile?" Sally broke in with a flutter of excitement. "I'll pay for it. Really."

She moved a trifle in advance of Vaska and deposited her bags before the door of one of them.

The driver, a man with a thin, sal-low face, had called out loudly, "Taxi!" as they emerged, and the girl with all her country ignorance, had moved towards him as if his appeal were a summons.

Vaska gave the address to the chauffeur and wondered whether he had any idea of the environs to which he was to pilot them. . . .

The girl huddled closer to Vaska as the taxi started on its way.

"It—it frightens me," she said suddenly. "Won't you pull the curtains? I know I'm silly, but if I see any more crowds, I shall think I am going mad."

"Little rube!" thought Vaska, but she dared not blunder at this delicate stage of the business. So she acquiesced with something soothing, and pulled the curtains down.

For a long time the cab continued on its way, and the little country-girl chattered, spoke of her home and her journey, and why she had come to town, and how she was to conquer it. Vaska drew her out, made her feel at ease with a dexterous tongue.

At last the taxi drew up with a jerk.

The driver, apparently unusually officious, jumped down and opened the door quickly.

Vaska, looking out, saw to her surprise that she was in an unfamiliar neighborhood. The little country-girl must have caught that subtle im-

pression: she seemed rather dazed herself.

"See here," said Vaska, "this isn't the right place. I told you—"

"Beg pardon?" said the chauffeur, leaning closer to the girl and to her.

To Vaska's amazement the little country-girl seemed to draw herself up in a rigid manner, then to relax quite limply. But she made no sound. Had she fainted? What on earth was wrong?

Vaska felt the vague presence of trouble, and at the same instant saw the sallow faced driver bend in her direction with something in his hand that glittered.

It was a poisoned needle!

Her wild glance sped through the opened doorway to the top of a flight of steps before which they had drawn up, and leapt in to a tall, hard-featured woman who stood there. . . .

It was Mrs. Mogridge!

Well might she be called redoubtable. The chauffeur was a man in her employ; she had perhaps signaled to him to secure them at any hazard when they emerged from the station; and she, herself, had then taken a second cab by a more direct route to the house. And here she was, calm, regal, sinister, awaiting their arrival with abominable nonchalance.

All these thoughts shot through Vaska's head with a plunging stab of jealousy. Even as understanding arrived, even as she opened her mouth to make an outcry, she felt the prick of the needle, and sank into an exquisite sensation of stupor.

Had she been able to possess a form apart from herself, and one gifted with sight, she would have seen the solitary policeman on the corner discreetly turn his back as, staggering under a strange burden, the chauffeur mounted the steps. On the last occasion the hard-featured woman halted him in the corridor.

"Very good, Chiswick," she purred in a feline voice utterly at variance with her physiognomy. "This first attempt has been very successful. I

shall not need you again, however, till next Thursday. You may take this."

The chauffeur crammed the bank note into his pocket, touched his hat, and in silence descended the steps. . . .

II

THE sun was streaming in through the windows when Vaska awoke, her head drowsy and benumbed. A knock on the door had called her from drugged slumber, and she opened her eyes in time to see a coloured maid enter with a tray of toast and coffee.

Vaska's wits were dulled, but she endeavored to think quickly. She recalled the disgraceful events of the evening before with a quiver of dismay. She had set forth to capture and had been captured! The ludicrous side of the situation was not apparent. She was racked only by unrelenting shame. She had been worsted so briskly, so easily, by this sharp-witted rival! With a sigh she admitted to an involuntary admiration of the incomparable Mrs. Mogridge.

At that moment her gaze swept across to a bed at the other side of the room where, in disheveled innocence, the little country-girl lay. Vaska's weak trait manifested itself. She was obsessed by pity; felt Mrs. Mogridge to be an unnatural monster. Her every thought drew instantly to an apex idea of succour. Poor little girl! Vaska knew that she herself need merely sacrifice her pride to secure her own release, but how to manage Sally's was a problem. She was aware that this Mrs. Mogridge was not likely to part with the spoils of battle won by such skillful stratagems.

She knotted her forehead over the matter, and determination entered her heart.

She turned to the maid who had now set down her tray and

was preparing to take her departure. "Tell Mrs. Mogridge," she said, "that I wish to see her here instantly. Do you understand? Say that it is a matter of business concerning Mr. B. Finn. That will bring her."

"Mis' Mogridge, you sayde?" questioned the maid. "There ain't no Mis' Mogridge here. But *Madame Grant* is a-coming in to see you mighty soon!"

With these words she took her leisurely departure, and Vaska's eyes regarded the slammed, locked door with a distinct expression of bewilderment. The slam of the door must have awakened the little country-girl. She struggled into a sitting posture.

"How did I get here?" she murmured fretfully as she, like Vaska, tried to account for her situation. She continued in a mumble to herself: "I picked that chauffeur on the way to the station. I gave him the right address for returning and told

him not to take any orders that he was given when I came out again. And then—and then—oh I remember!—somehow I got *here*. He must have been an agent for someone. To think of *my* being fooled! Something's funny. I—"

Vaska had not caught the drift of these astonishing mutters.

"Dear," she said softly, "don't excite yourself, or get hysterical. I'm going to help you to get out of here. You are at present imprisoned in a den of vice presided over by Madame Grant or Mrs. Mogridge, I don't know which; but I'm—"

"Mrs. Mogridge?" shrieked the little country-girl. "I'm Mrs. Mogridge! Who the hell are you?"

... Vaska, with Mr. B. Finn's remarks concerning the deceptive calibre of Mrs. Mogridge's "method" rising vividly in her mind, turned her gaze upon the wall.

The expression of her eyes was . . . thoughtful.



OTHER MEN

By Sara Teasdale

WHEN I talk with other men
I always think of you—
Your words are keener than their words,
And they are gentler, too.

When I look at other men,
I wish your face were there,
With its grey eyes and dark skin
And tossed black hair.

When I think of other men,
Dreaming alone by day,
The thought of you like a strong wind
Blows the dreams away.



THE UNFLAWED FRIENDSHIP

By Ward Muir

PERHAPS I had dozed. A steamer-chair, a rug, a warm afternoon, an Atlantic liner rolling so rhythmically, on its eastbound voyage, that even the most squeamish traveler could do justice to luncheon . . . naturally I dozed! Until my book, slipping from my knees, thumped down on the deck and awoke me.

The professor, who occupied the chair next mine, picked it up.

He glanced at its title as he handed it back to me. "Havelock Ellis, eh?"

"You know Havelock Ellis's work?" I asked.

He nodded. "A great man. One of the greatest now living." His faded blue eyes kindled. "I daresay you and I are the only individuals on the *Campania* at this moment who have read a single paragraph of Havelock Ellis."

"He's taboo, I suppose, in polite society?"

The professor grimaced. "I shouldn't know where to buy his 'Psychology of Sex' volumes in New York," he said; "and I'm told that even with a Reader's Ticket you can't get them across the counter at the British Museum library in London. Our civilization is paradoxical, isn't it?"

"To ban Havelock Ellis is hardly what you'd describe as civilization."

"Oh yes it is!" he insisted. "The same civilization which does these stupidly ugly things can do sanely beautiful things too. I'm all for civilization as against savagery or paganism, even when civilization makes a fool of itself."

Stewards were distributing cups of

tea. At the remote end of the vista of deck a group of strenuous youths and maidens were occupied with that most futile of amusements, shuffleboard, or shovelboard, or whatever it is called. Behind them a limitless desert of green ocean appeared, for a space, and then vanished, as our rail alternately dipped and rose skyward.

"Civilization! And you used the word taboo." The professor mused over his tea-cup. "I could spin you a story—on the lines of that old game which people used to play—working in 'civilization' and 'taboo' pretty neatly, I reckon; an interesting one to any student of Havelock Ellis."

He drank his tea, and put the cup under his chair.

"Wonderful stuff, tea!" He wiped his moustache. "You're an author, aren't you? I know your yarns. The magazines may be shy of the gist of what I'm going to outline to you, but if you can make anything out of it, you're welcome. Only change the names."

"You can rely on me for that."

"It sticks in my mind," he went on, "that you once wrote something to the effect that civilization cannot alter or divert one tremendous driving force of nature—the sex-instinct. A fairly safe axiom! Yet, there is an example, an example which we observe all around us, of civilization's absolute power, the power of a purely ethical concept, not merely to deflect and tame and modify this primordial instinct, but absolutely to eliminate it."

"Tell me what you mean." My curiosity was aroused.

The professor chuckled. He was a

very unobtrusive, hueless, quizzical little man, and what he was professor of no one had as yet discovered. All I knew was that he came from a university in the West, somewhere. Our adjacent steamer-chairs had introduced us. He was evidently acquainted with my name; his I had not yet learned.

"You're Scotch," he resumed, "so I wonder if you've been to a place called Glen Roy?"

"I stayed at the hotel there once, for the fishing."

"Did you ever happen to see Roy himself, *the* Roy?"

"The Laird? That stately veteran in the kilts. I caught sight of him occasionally, trudging along with his sister. They seemed to be inseparable. A queer old grey pair!"

"Eternally prowling around the moorland roads of their estate—yes, a queer, inseparable old pair of grey aristocrats!" The professor sighed. "It's odd that you should have actually set eyes on them. I'm glad you did; it'll help to make my story intelligible."

"Then you know Glen Roy?"

"Oh yes, I know it. I visited the district some years ago. It's the scene of my story. . . . Told farcically the story would make my reputation in the *Campania's* smoking-saloon. But to me it's not farce. You'll see why. It's not farce, it's only pitiful, grotesque: an example of the rather frightening and rather exasperating operation of Chance."

He ruminated. "What would you do," he asked suddenly, "if you found yourself in possession of a pile of money and were a bit past the age when you could regain the zest for the things that money can buy? One might present a complete set of Havelock Ellis to every public library in the world. And there are some laboratories which one could endow. I entertain myself with visionary schemes of that sort. . . . Never mind. I'm wandering from my promise. Here goes."

He leant back in his chair, pulled down the brim of his hat to shield his eyes from the sun, and began:

II

THE ROYS of Glen Roy (he said) were no end of an ancient family, you must understand. I say "were" because the two old grey folks whom you saw are dead now, a bachelor and a spinster, though to be sure a branch of the clan is not quite extinct elsewhere. Old Angus Roy and his sister, Miss Roy—the pair who perambulated the moors—were, however, the last of the clan's main stem.

When you went to Glen Roy you saw, in addition to Roy Castle and its attendant village, a biggish hotel and a millionaire's shooting-box and a row of brand new cottages for the gillies and the gamekeepers employed in connection with the fishing and shooting. But all this is recent. Glen Roy, which is still twenty miles from the nearest railroad station, used to be utterly off the track. And its lairds ruled as kings in their domain.

The earlier lairds of Glen Roy were a wild lot, and had the very deuce of a record—romantic and (by quiet standards such as ours) a bit improper. The men of the family were tall, well-set-up fellows, celebrated for keeping their heads in a whisky bout and losing their heads over love-affairs. Their alliances and misalliances would have been the gossip of the day, only in *that* day such episodes supplied the material for ballad minstrelsy instead.

It is necessary to appreciate that the Roys were a kind of fine flower of their caste and honourable fellows by their lights, not mere vulgar seducers or blackguards. And by the time that Angus Roy, the one we're dealing with, came into the property, no doubt the clan's hot blood had been thinned, some modern refinement had cooled what was left, and, for him, at any rate, an Oxford education had laid on a final veneer of conventionalism. Nevertheless, Angus must have inherited a fiery strain. He was no weakling. When you saw him he was old and bent; but when he became Laird of Glen Roy he was a noble youth (his portraits show it), as

full of life as one of the stags on his heather, and capable of holding his own with his equals, the other local gentry, the Buchans of Glen Buchan, the Dalgleishes and the Macnaughtons and the Carphins—all sportsmen and, probably, hard drinkers.

Angus, in those days, was alone at the castle. A younger cousin had, for some reason, vanished to Canada and been heard of no more. And there seems to be every likelihood that Angus would have taken unto himself a wife, but for a very curious circumstance.

There was a girl in the village called Lorna. She was not a peasant; she lived, as a sort of housekeeper, with the minister, one David Blair, who was blind.

Now this Reverend David Blair, who was more like a priest than a Presbyterian minister, and whose patriarchal locks (I've seen a picture of him) hung down almost to his shoulders, was *au fait* with the whole history of the Roys. He had been a sort of confessor to Angus Roy's father, perhaps to his grandfather; he had baptised and married and buried two generations of Roys—and helped them out of their scrapes. And he was very fond of Angus Roy: very fond, also, of the girl, Lorna, who looked after his manse and was a prop to him in his blindness.

Everybody called her Lorna Blair, but it was understood that she was an adopted child. No one bothered to ask where she had come from; it sufficed that she was a kindly, high-spirited, handsome lass, well liked by every cottager in the glen.

I don't know for certain, mind you, that Angus ever got within thinkable distance of falling in love with Lorna Blair. But it might have happened. It would have been quite natural if it *had* happened, for they were good friends as boy and girl and still better friends when Angus came home with his Oxford polish and took his dead father's place at the castle. I say it would have been "natural," yet that is an ironically inappropriate word; for what supervened was this. The Reverend David

Blair, possibly providing against an awkward complication, and in any case deeming that the time for secrecy was past, told Angus the girl's origin.

He told Angus, I mean, that this girl, Lorna, was the daughter of the just dead Roy: that Angus, in short, was Lorna's brother.

The affair had exhibited features of what one might call the impropriety-with-honour which was characteristic of the Roys and their ongoing. It was a case of "all's well that ends well," for, of course, as you know, in Scotland a marriage legitimatises the child born before wedlock. Not that mere marriage made any difference to the blood relationship between Lorna and Angus, which the minister revealed. The two were sister and brother. But there *had* been a certain slur on the birth of Lorna; her mother was a woman of prominent position and for some perhaps needlessly quixotic reason the thing was hushed up, the child taken away and only when in her teens was brought back to live, not at the castle, but at the manse.

Blair, the minister, seems to have been vague about the details. He simply knew the particulars as he had been told them—and he had, as more than once before, kept his peace and assisted the wrongdoers (if they were wrongdoers) out of their dilemma. Anyhow, Angus Roy's mother had died when Angus was born; but though Lorna, her other child, then one year old, might have gone to live at the castle, she didn't, as a matter of fact, do anything of the sort. Later she came to the manse; and there she stayed.

But now (not unwisely, as I've indicated) the minister presented Lorna with her brother Angus and Angus with his sister Lorna, and by common consent their relationship was made public. I rather think they were both pleased. They were chums—better chums than many a brother and sister. And as, about this time, the Reverend David Blair breathed his last, there was no difficulty about Lorna installing herself

to housekeep and be hostess at the castle instead of at the manse.

You saw the brother and sister about half a century later, and, as you summed them up, they were a queer old grey pair. He had never married, neither had she. They were utterly satisfied with each other's company; and like many a couple of that sort they had become a trifle eccentric in their ways, narrow in outlook, very religious and orthodox and conservative. He always wore a tartan kilt, to the end of his days; she, as a girl, had been in the habit of going hatless, and she always went hatless, except at funerals or in church, when she wore a black bonnet. They were "characters," this brother and sister, Angus and Lorna; not undignified, not unintelligent, but serenely unprogressive. There was a kind of mild and haughty magnificence in their total lack of interest in the world beyond Glen Roy, where they had grown old together.

As you noticed, they were inveterate pedestrians. Their energy was enormous. They knew every inch of the Roy estate—and it was a large estate. As young people they went in for shooting and fishing and boating. Latterly they did nothing but walk. They never seem to have ridden, though they owned horses. A few years ago they had somehow been persuaded to buy an automobile; but not once, as far as I know, did they travel anywhere in it; it was only used to bring stores from the station. I was privileged to use it while I was at the Glen.

Curiously enough, they had found themselves growing wealthy, far wealthier than any previous Roys had been. For their loch, as the village blacksmith informed me, was "hotching with trout," and its shore was therefore pounced upon by speculators as the site of a luxurious hotel. There was a salmon-river too—priceless in Scotland in these days; there was a deer-forest and there were grouse. The Glen Roy district, by reason of its very barrenness, is a species of sporting gold-mine; and Angus, though he reserved much of

his land, was never afraid to sell at a bargain. Whether he approved of the shooting-box and the hotel I have no idea; but he and his sister looked on at their building, often, when they passed that way during their rambles.

The story goes that they became a little miserly in their old age. It may be true. If so, they shared the enjoyment of miserliness as they shared all enjoyments. They had everything in common—every pleasure, every sadness, every perplexity. They lived for each other's companionship. They did not talk much, they just existed by virtue of each other's presence. For more than half a century they were never parted. Lorna went nowhere without her brother Angus, and Angus went nowhere without his sister Lorna. And at the last they died within twenty-four hours of each other.

They were buried in Glen Roy churchyard by the comparatively juvenile successor of the Reverend David Blair,—they were buried in the ancestral tomb, and on the stone you read: "Angus Roy, aged so-and-so, and His Sister, Lorna Roy . . ."

Well, the inscription need not be altered, but it is a wrong inscription all the same. Angus and Lorna *weren't* brother and sister.

They had always thought they were. But they weren't.

Isn't it exasperating and tragic and bizarre? These two who were simply made for each other, living all those years in the belief—it was everybody's belief—that they were brother and sister, when, as it turned out, they were nothing of the sort!

Angus Roy's father had left documents which explained his subterfuge as clearly as could be; only no one had ever taken the trouble to unearth them and read them. It was a typical Roy story—some woman led astray by a man other than Roy, perhaps by one of the scapegrace Buchans or Dalgleishes or Macnaughtons or Carphins, and Roy accepting the responsibility for his crony's sake and the woman's. The woman was not Angus Roy's mother—

was no relation of his mother—nor was old Roy the father of Lorna. He had only deceived the blind minister with this invention to shield some fellow-youngster as indiscreet as Roy himself and perhaps less conscientious.

So far from being brother and sister Angus and Lorna were not in the remotest degree akin. Yet the mere assertion that they were brother and sister, blunderingly impressed on them by a pastor whom they both looked up to as infallible, had so completely shifted the subtle perspective of their mutual regard that thereafter they *were* brother and sister, to themselves, and to all the world.

It's amazing, when you come to think of it, what this occult and implacable power, the power of the association of ideas, can achieve. I spoke of civilization: you mentioned the word taboo: do you realize that what I have been telling you is the final illustration of the effects of both? An antique tribal taboo, blossoming into a necessary and wholesome custom of civilization, and ultimately producing the most beautiful of bonds—that of the man and the woman who are brother and sister!

Brother and sister, Angus and Lorna loved each other far more dearly than many a husband and wife. Yet, but for a theory, a mistake, they might have been husband and wife. They never knew, they can never know now. And if they *had* known, would life have been any richer for them than it was? Think of the average marriage, after its first passion has chilled, and then picture to yourself the pair, not as husband and wife, but as brother and sister. . . . Isn't it *because* they are man and wife, because they are *not* brother and sister, that the relationship has its regrets, and has contained, in its essence, some speck of poison which has flawed its sweetness? That drop of poison, those regrets, can never enter into such an alliance as the alliance which ended with the deaths of Lorna and Angus. All a mistake—yes, but there was no mistake about their affection for each other. It was love; but precisely because it was

a love which never dreamed of the fickle enchantment which is supposed to irradiate marriage, it endured and grew and became perfect.

You remember how Charles Lamb dedicates his book of poems—"with all a brother's fondness, inscribed to Mary Ann Lamb, the author's best friend and sister?" Well, Lorna was Angus's best friend. . . . A poignant and gentle phrase! A *possible* phrase, had passion been the mainspring of their amity, but not a *likely* phrase!

III

THE professor fell silent. Stewards were collecting the empty tea-cups and most of the steamer chairs were vacated, their occupants having aroused enough vigour, at last, for a stroll. At the end of the deck there was a crowd round the players of shovelboard. My companion and I were alone.

"You worked in the words 'civilization' and 'taboo' all right," I said. "Yes, it was a singular business. That poor old grey pair! I didn't know, when I stared at them, that they were the unconscious actors in such a sad drama of misunderstanding."

"Sad? I'm not at all sure, I tell you, that it *was* sad. We're prejudiced," said the professor. "As sentimentalists we don't like to see our 'happy ending' baulked so wantonly."

"How comes it that you got hold of the tale, anyway?" I asked.

"Perhaps," he said slowly, "perhaps (at least from my point of view) I'm the happy ending. Reflect for a moment what would have occurred if the truth had been disclosed, concerning Angus and Lorna, early in their careers. Obviously they'd have married. One surmises that there would have been a child or children to succeed to the Glen Roy estate. Instead, it goes elsewhere. You remember I told you of a Roy cousin who vanished to Canada? He's dead now, but his son inherits. I don't exactly resemble a Highland chieftain, do I? All the same—"

"You're the heir!"

"I'm the heir. I'm Roy of Glen Roy. You behold me on my way to take possession." He sighed. "A dilapidated university professor, suddenly rich, through a kink in the current of circumstance—but just old enough to find a faint amusement in planning what good can be done with the money!"

He sighed again. "And it looks as though the Roys were nearly ended, for, like Angus, I'm a bachelor. Not that I

wish I had married . . . but I'm not only wifeless, I'm sisterless. Do you know, I believe that to some men it is a far greater loss never to have had a sister than never to have found a wife. . . . Yes, old Angus, in his serenity, gave me a glimpse of a little-known secret. Long ago I envied him for the comradeship which was the source of that serenity, and even now, with the consciousness of how fate had fooled him, I can envy him for it still."



THE GROUCH

By Roger O. Lane

HE was a very sour and bitter old man. He lived in a tumble-down shack, perched on a rocky point overlooking the sea. All day he would sit and brood over the injustice of this cold world. His poverty was apparent, his condition deplorable. Those who pitied him soon let him alone, for he shuddered at the mere suggestion of work. He did not even fish as did other men, because his house was too far from the beach.

One fine day the Queen of the Fairies chanced to be passing by and saw the old man. Her warm heart was touched and her beautiful eyes filled with tears. She took note of his condition and determined to better it. That night, when mortals were sleeping, she called her fairy band together.

"To-night we will beautify his place," she said. "To-morrow night we will fill his larder."

In a short time the place was transformed. Rocks were rolled away and a beautiful lawn soon stretched from house to cliff. Rare and beautiful flowers were set out. Shrubs and shade trees they scattered here and there. Carefully trained vines with sweet smelling blossoms hid the nakedness of the house. When the morning sun peeped over the horizon the Queen and her band hid in the bushes and waited in breathless expectation.

The door opened and the old man stepped forth. He saw the miracle of beauty. His gloomy face became even gloomier.

"Gosh!" he whined, "do they expect me to mow that lawn!"



IT is becoming increasingly difficult to be wicked. There are so few really beautiful women.



WHAT SHE WAS MADE FOR

By Robert McBlair

THE girl put one slim, stocking-clad foot into the water. It was deliciously warm, and slipped upon the sandy beach in little glassy ripples. She looked up and down the beach again, but there was only the stretch of pale sand, losing itself in the darkness, and behind her, against the star-lighted sky, the dark silhouettes of scattered cottages. She picked up the oilskin bundle at her feet and walked out into the formless darkness of the ocean until the water was awash at her elbows.

Something then in the dark void of the unstable element stopped her. She gazed down into the face of a little "drowned" star that far, far below her in the still water wavered and danced like the ghost of a lost planet. A momentary touch of fear drew her hand to her breast, and she looked over her shoulder with hesitation and longing at a light in the bedroom window of one of the cottages.

Over the misty rim of the horizon suddenly came the moon, like the top of a mammoth red orange, and little strips of orange light began riding up to her upon the incoming ripples. As she stood there, motionless, the globe of light rose slowly higher, turned from red to silver, and with a white finger etched the outlines of a graceful steam yacht riding at anchor a quarter of a mile offshore.

The girl tightened her lips, turned her back to the cottage, and with the deliberate strokes of the expert began swimming toward the yacht, pushing the bundle before her.

The steps to the deck had not been drawn up for the night, and here the girl rested for a few moments. Then,

picking up her bundle, she mounted to the deck.

The sound of men's voices came to her from towards the bow, apparently from the other side of the pilot-house. She dropped her bundle in the shadow of the cabin and walked softly towards the stern, leaving little footprints and small streamlets of water in her wake.

A broad-shouldered young man, in white flannels, with a chin like the prow of a battleship, was sitting on a coil of rope near the stern rail, puffing on a "bulldog" pipe. She stood in the shadow and watched him for a moment. Then, drawing a deep breath, she stepped out into the bright moonlight, and with as much grace as she could command in a scanty bathing suit, sank down on the deck a few feet away from him.

The man's mouth and eyes opened automatically and the bulldog pipe dropped to the deck with a little clatter.

"Good evening!" said the girl.

The man's mouth slowly closed, and while he fumbled on the deck for his pipe his eyes traveled over the girl's slim, rounded figure, to which the wet bathing suit clung affectionately. Apparently he was not a person who reacted swiftly or even happily to surprises.

"What the devil!" he exclaimed. And then, contritely, "I beg your pardon, but—"

"But you were not expecting a female visitor at this hour of the night. Is that it?" The girl laughed nervously. "I am glad to hear it. That would be—to say the least—highly improper, and besides might reasonably give offense to your wife—provided you have one!"

He gloomed at her, evidently await-

ing an explanation. She gave it—or thought she did.

"I came out looking for—romance," she said. "And—and in order to forget my husband."

"Is—is he—dead?" inquired the man in a hushed voice.

She giggled. "Of course not. Then I should be trying to remember him. He's alive, but—but he's *stupid*."

"Oh," said the man uncertainly. He began to refill his pipe.

"You'll think I'm foolish, I suppose. But if you knew how desperately I long for excitement! He leaves me to go on duck-shooting trips for days at a time. He just loves me—perfunctorily. He's got used to me, that's the trouble. It's been three years, you know, and—"

"What is his name?" interrupted the man. "I do some shooting myself. Maybe—"

"Couldn't you guess the name after that stupid description? It's '*George*.' Never mind the other part. Now," she added, smiling up at him, "I'm sure yours is much more romantic than that!"

The man grinned, and flushed a little. "To tell the truth, it is Hubert," he admitted. "But—"

"He goes off and leaves me for days at a time. You wouldn't do that, would you—Hubert?"

He looked resolutely off to where the shore lights twinkled above their elongated images in the water.

"If you are married," he began.

"Oh, marriage! Marriage! What is marriage?" she interrupted passionately. "A form! A symbol for a spiritual relationship that is honored more often in the breach than in the observance! You don't know women, Mr. Hubert, if you think that a mere form can bind them. If a wife is virtuous it is because she loves and is loved, not because of a crinkly marriage certificate. Love is the only law that a woman will recognize. It is love that makes a maid become a woman or keeps a woman a maid. Don't talk to me of marriage. Talk to me of love—and then I can understand you!"

The man seemed to be subdued by this outburst. "I don't know much about women," he explained meekly. They were silent, and then: "But how did you know that the skipper of this yacht wouldn't be bald-headed and have a red beard?" he asked.

"Oh, I've seen you on shore," she replied, smiling as if to herself.

"Well, how do you know I am not going to send you back home in the row-boat in about five minutes?" he demanded.

"Because I knew you were going to sail to-night," she responded. "And to do that you have to catch the flood-tide in order to get over the bar. See: it is just turning." She pointed to where the yacht was slowly swinging round against its anchor.

"The devil!" he exclaimed. "You almost made me miss it." He ran forward and gave an order or two, then came back and resumed his seat on the coil of rope.

"I see that you might call this romance," he said after a moment, "but how about me? I admit that it might be very romantic to have '*George*' look me up and order coffee and pistols for two at sunrise, but that's not saying I would enjoy it."

"I will relieve you of all responsibility, my good knight," she returned ironically. "A lady will always lie to protect the man's name. That is our modern chivalry."

"Well, you needn't get so bitter about it," he said in an aggrieved tone. "I'm sure if you women stop being our superiors and insist upon being our equals you should share *some* of the burden. Now if *George*—"

"Oh, hang *George*! Don't talk about him. Talk about me."

He looked her over. "Aren't you afraid of catching cold in that—er—suit?" he inquired. "It's a little—brief."

"Don't you like me in this suit?" she demanded.

"I would like you in anything," he answered.

"Now, Hubert, you are improving,"

she said with a smile. "And you may get me a cape. This suit is beginning to feel a bit—*clammy*."

He brought it and put it around her shoulders carefully; in fact so carefully that his breath was close to her neck.

"Don't!" she cried.

He returned to his coil of rope a little sullenly.

"Not that I wouldn't like it," she said after a minute. "But, you see, I haven't quite forgotten George yet, and I want to like Hubert more. There are lots of things I want to forget about George. He got quite drunk at Christmas; he will flirt with any pretty woman; he feels that just because he has married me he no longer has to make himself lovable; he has dreadful table manners. Then, too, I must forget that he's quite good looking, has beautiful teeth, can dance divinely—"

"Oh, hang George!" exclaimed the man with emphasis. "Don't talk about him. Talk about me."

The girl laughed. "Well, what have you to say for yourself?"

"I love you," he said.

"Well," drawled the girl, pursing her lips thoughtfully, "of course that is important. But the man I can wholly—love must be everything that George isn't. He must put me before duck-shooting, before whisky, before tobacco—"

"Oh, I say now!" the man protested.

The girl raised her chin, and drawing the clack about her stiffly, tapped her red mouth with a slim hand.

"It must be getting late," she remarked coldly. "I suppose you can give me a place to sleep. I see that you have chosen to take me so far from shore that I can't swim back."

"Oh, I say now!" protested the man again, this time in alarm. "I didn't mean that about the tobacco, you know. That is, I only meant— Oh, hang it all, I told you I love you!"

She had risen to her feet. "That phrase, Mr. Hubert, has been so often abused that it doesn't carry with it much weight. Every Johnny whispers it to

his chorus girl at supper. Not being a chorus girl, I require greater evidence of sincerity. Will you show me my room?"

He stood before her. "Tell me," he said earnestly, "what would you really have me do or be?"

She walked along the deck, picked up her oilskin bundle and followed him to her stateroom door.

"I don't care what you do," she told him. "But any man, to win and keep me, must be in love with me, and prove it. Good night, Mr. Hubert."

She stepped inside the room, closed the door, and seemed to take satisfaction in locking it while he still stood outside.

In a moment his footsteps had died away down the corridor, and she turned to her oilskin bundle. Carefully unwrapped, it disclosed a sailor hat, a canvas outing skirt with wide, perpendicular green stripes, a white shirt-waist, a green silk sweater, a pair of white leather shoes with black tips and heels, a pair of green silk stockings, some fluffy underclothing, and, finally, a sheer flesh-colored crêpe-de-chine nightgown and a silk peignoir of a delicious coral pink.

After a rub-down with a rough towel that set her to glowing, she slipped on the nightgown and peignoir, turned out the light and looked out of the window, watching the white foam splotches pass swiftly by on the dark water, hearing the throbbing of the engine and the seething of little waves, feeling the salt air in her nostrils.

Presently she leaned far out and tried anxiously to catch a last glimpse of the light in the cottage bedroom. But the shore was so far behind that all she could see now was a line of tiny lights in the distance.

There came a knock on the door. She opened it and found a Jap in a white coat, holding out to her an envelope on a salver.

She took it, entered the room, turned on the light and opened the envelope. Inside was a check for ten thousand dollars, made out to cash. And on a mon-

ogrammed bit of note paper was this question: "Would I do this for anybody I didn't love?"

She looked at the paper thoughtfully for a moment.

Then she tore the check into several pieces, and finding a pencil on the bureau, wrote this answer to his question: "I really can't say whether you would or not."

Smiling to herself, she re-enclosed the papers and returned them to the waiting Jap.

It may have been half an hour later before there came another knock on the door. The Jap was there again, with another envelope and, this time, with a delicate ivory rose, beautifully carved.

She closed the door while she read the letter.

"Dearest of Sweet Creatures" (it said): "I am sending you a little ivory rose. Heretofore I have always kept this, because it was my mother's. Now it is yours, because I love you. I've thrown my pipe overboard, dumped my tobacco jar, and given all the whiskey on board to the steward. But these are minor matters. The important thing is that your mouth is like a crimson flower, that your eyes are stars at evening, that you are the most beautiful person in the world, and the most lovable, and that if I thought I couldn't have you forever I would want to die. No—I would die. No matter what befalls

either of us, I shall always love you. Hubert."

She didn't return this letter, but she tore off a bit of blank paper from the bottom of it and wrote her answer, which was this: "I want to hear you say it."

No more than a minute could have elapsed before the door flew open and the man stood in the doorway.

"You little, heavenly, pink imp!" he cried, and crumpled her in his arms.

Presently, somewhat mournfully, he murmured: "I'll never smoke again."

"Oh, you poor lamb!" she said, laughing. "I didn't really want you to stop. I just wanted you to say you would."

He laughed comfortably. "Do you think the kid will be safe, honey?"

She nodded. "Yes. The new nurse is a good one. And George, darling, I didn't mean all those horrid things I said!"

"That's all right," he comforted. "I deserved them, and a lot more. Hereafter we're going to have more—romance."

"I planned it to come out exactly this way!" she triumphed. "Don't you think I was just made for a business woman?"

"No," he replied, hugging her to him, "I think you were just made for a business man."

For once, he had the last word.



ONE may kiss a girl once, and depart, or twice, and flee. But three kisses make a chain only to be severed with many pains and much money.



A MAN is young as long as he is vain of his vices, and old when he laughs at the sins of his youth.



THE FORCED BUD

By G Vere Tyler

SHE was full of reserved depths, marked subtleties, and possessed of an indefinite yet irresistible charm. Her courtesy had in it all the expressed disdain of a devotee to the conventional. She talked with a certain plaintive deliberation, yet with the freedom of one trained in the art of speech from infancy. Her deportment in all social matters was perfect. She knew just how to act at the theatre as well as at table; on the street as well as at a dance. She would have as soon thought of going out without her dress as without her gloves. Physically she was fragile and looked like an angel. Her eyes were the color of pale blue silk, and her hair was like thistle-down. She was the only young thing in the house and perhaps the oldest. . . . She was thirteen.

Her father was a grave business man who had a mistress. She knew about the mistress. Her mother was a handsome woman who spent lavishly the money her husband accumulated, drank a good deal, and had an admirer. She knew about the admirer.

From the standpoint of a forced bud in a hot-house, she was infinitely pathetic. One had only to glance at her to recognize that she was blooming prematurely. Servants looked after her. Being well paid, she was cared for to a fine point.

She went to the theatres a good deal, to the Strand once a week, and had afternoon tea in the shops accompanied by a French maid. She talked French, of course, and very sweetly. In secret, sometimes she would lock the door on herself; she still played with her dolls, especially paper dolls that she cut and

painted dresses for. In public she surprised people by her sage remarks. At the proper moment she would hold her mother in check and keep things balanced. Her father she knew very slightly and disliked.

"Mamma," she once said, with the blue silk eyes gathering a sharp light, "I sometimes wonder if he is my father!"

It was the only time she ever received a slap from her mother's hand. It fell on her cheek and left a pink glow upon it for some hours.

Vivette looked in the mirror several times at this pink glow. The hurt from her cheek had passed; it only felt a bit warm. But her entire body stung from head to her feet.

Finally as she turned from the mirror she said in a low voice: "I'm very sorry Mamma did that; she ought to know I—I love her too much!"

She fought the tears that gathered for the first time since the incident, as she took her seat in a red velvet arm-chair that would have held three like her, and fell to hard thinking. She was thinking about herself, wondering why she had ever been born, why her parents had brought her into the world.

"Of course," she said aloud finally, "I am his child, for I look exactly like him!"

The blue eyes grew dimmer until they overflowed and her thin arms with their fragile little hands so neatly attached went out.

"Oh! papa," she breathed a bit chokingly. "I wish you could like me a little. I'm terribly in need of you, because I fear I'm going to dislike Mamma! And then," the little fingers

went over her mouth, "what would I do? I've got to have somebody to love—I've got to!"

Her head with its colorless fluffy hair and big flowered bow sticking out tremendously went down to the soft arm of the red velvet chair and she cried quite a little while.

Her mother caught her thus and gave one of her thin shoulders a little shake.

"Why do you cry, Vivette," she inquired sharply, "what's happened?"

Vivette looked up. "Nothing, Mamma!"

"Then why do you cry? A fraction more and you would have red lids."

"But I haven't got them," Vivette retorted sharply.

"No, you haven't; perhaps your father didn't at your age!"

"Papa is a very handsome man, Mamma," exclaimed Vivette, who for some reason of her own always took up for him. "We both dislike him, of course, but he is handsome, the handsomest man who enters this house except—" she paused a second, "perhaps Julian!"

"That may be, Vivette, I'm not questioning your papa's good looks. On cold days, however, his lids pinken, and you, if you value your beauty, had better look out!"

"Oh!" and the child's voice was full of cynicism, "I know how to value my beauty, Mamma; it's the one thing you have drilled into me."

"I hope so!"

As she turned sharply, Vivette breathed in the faint fragrance of a strange sachet her mother had used of late and that gave her a delicious faint feeling. It brought the tears again to her eyes.

"What are you crying about?" demanded her mother. "Because I boxed your ears? You needed it! You've been needing correction sometime, Vivette, and I've been neglecting my duty!"

Vivette looked at her with wet cheeks but cleared eyes. "I was crying about us, Mamma; you, I, and Papa! We're," she echoed her father's words of the

morning, "such a beastly, worldly, nasty lot! Sometimes it gets on my nerves, and sometimes I just feel a stranger here! Neither of you seem like parents to me. You're just two wicked people, and it's awful, Mamma, I hate to think of it. You know what Papa tells you you are, and when I grow up—you heard him say so—I'll be a woman just like you! Why shouldn't I be? I've loved you so much I've wanted to be like you! I've done everything I could to imitate you. Of course, I'll be what Papa says, just 'another one!' I heard all the things he said this morning!"

"Well, why *shouldn't* you be like your mother?" Mrs. Carroll had flushed.

"No reason, Mamma, only somehow it frightens me—that is, when I think of what Papa says! I'm all the time feeling, too, I shall miss something, and that I'll feel that way all my life! It's all awful!" The child stood up with a pink flush in both cheeks now. "If Papa had to be bad, Mamma, why couldn't *you* be good to even up things for me? Don't you think one of you should have thought of that?—of me?"

Her mother who was dressed, very wonderfully dressed, in motor garb, looked long and searchingly at the child.

"I don't know what you are talking about, Vivette, with your good and bad! Are you going to sit in judgment on your parents? Your father is right, you are getting to know entirely too much. We're going to send you off to a convent!"

Vivette sprang to her excitedly. "Oh! are you, Mamma?"

"Yes, I guess that will nip some of your growing worldliness in the bud!"

"Oh! I hope so, Mamma! Will you choose one with a garden with a high wall around it, a *big* garden with lots and lots of flowers? Will you see to that?"

"You'll have the *best*, Vivette, of course."

"And be with the sisters? Will you stipulate that one be appointed to walk in the garden with me, Mamma, and talk to me about heaven and the angels! I *know* all about the world and people, and I do so want some one who will talk to me about the things I don't know! You'll see about that, won't you? I *have* been a little frightened recently. Several times when I took out my paper dolls, I had a little sick feeling; I'm tired of them, I fear I am, and if it really is so, I would have nothing to turn to—nothing! *Don't* change your mind! You know how you always decide upon things and then change, especially about me, and oh! Mamma, I've just been dreaming and dreaming about a garden, a big, big—I've annoyed you?—don't be angry, Mamma! Shall I run and get you a cocktail to start out on?"

"No, I'm lunching at Sherry's. I'll get one there."

Vivette grew pale. "Are you lunching with Julian, Mamma?"

"No! A bunch of *women*! Does that suit you!"

She swept past her, but the child was upon her. "Kiss me, Mamma, kiss me good-bye, won't you? I've got to go on loving you, Mamma, I'll die if I don't!" And the slender arms went as far as they could around the motor-coat. "Kiss me!" she implored looking up.

"You funny little kid," said her mother as she bent to give her a kiss through a white veil that had black roses woven in it. "I guess you do get lonesome at times. Why *won't* you like Mamie Phillips?"

"I can't, Mamma!"

"Well, then, if you prefer your own company to that of nice little girls your own age, don't *think*! You understand me now, don't *think*! It will spoil *all* your prospects for being a beauty. And don't cry. I have warned you now, you have those delicate lids that might get red!"

"I'll remember! Give my love to the bunch, Mamma, and tell them to have one on me!"

II

WHEN the sound of her mother's car was lost in other street noises, Vivette again took her seat in the big red arm-chair to think.

She was doing a good deal of thinking recently she assured herself, in spite of her mother's warnings, and in all her thoughts Julian, whom, of course, everybody knew was madly in love with her mamma, cropped up. Vivette wondered why. Why she was 'nothing but a child—she was always hearing that—and Julian was twenty-six. She knew, because mamma had let her help light the candles on the cake at the birthday luncheon she had given him.

She had an awfully nice time that day! She had on a perfectly beautiful new dress and Julian had been just lovely to her, called her the Princess, and made a little speech about her that everybody clapped. But that wasn't the *real* time, the time she *always* thought of! It was when mamma had her birthday party on Julian's yacht and made everybody laugh so much by only allowing them to light sixteen candles. That, Vivette never failed to tell herself, was the one really beautiful time of her life. Ever after—it was six months now—Vivette always thought of Julian standing as she had seen him when they rowed out to him, in the bow of the yacht that sat quivering slightly like a white butterfly on a spray of ragged robin. Vivette thought that out for herself and was quite excited over the idea. She remembered that the sunlight made Julian's hair look quite golden, and that the railing of the yacht had been twined with red and white roses and green smilax all in honor of her mamma's birthday.

She thought she had never seen anything so beautiful in all her life. She hadn't been able to speak; it took her breath away, but she clapped her hands. Julian was all in white, with no coat on, and had his shirt turned in at the neck. Vivette remembered how she stared at his throat that was quite

tanned, and that she thought his hair—that had made her laugh—must be tanned, too, as she had never seen it look such a shiny gold. Julian, she had thought, was more beautiful than his yacht that looked like a white butterfly. The whole afternoon was, as Vivette often said, a beautiful dream, and she had never known before that such a sunset could be in the world! She had told Julian she wished she could live on a yacht so she could see the sunset every day. And Julian pinched her cheek, and sat her up on the railing and held her while they watched the sun sink out of sight.

Her mamma had worried her a good deal that night, and she had disgraced herself at table, with the other guests staring at her mamma, whose arms were flying about. Vivette had done a terrible thing—she had burst out crying. Julian got up quickly then and led her up on deck, where such a surprise greeted her that she forgot her tears. The sky had been all red when they went down to dinner. It was bright moonlight now, and Vivette remembered how *wonderful* it seemed to her, as though they had stepped into another world.

Julian clapped for a servant and had some bottles and wine glasses removed. Then he put her in a hammock where she could look straight up at the sky. And then Julian bent over her and took both of her hands in his and told her not to worry—that everything was all right, and she could go to sleep there if she liked! Oh! how beautiful that moment was! When Julian, after making her say she was quite all right, turned to leave her, she put out her hands. Oh! how she wanted him to stay, just a few more moments. But, of course, she didn't say anything.

A little later some ice-cream was served to her on a little wicker table. While she was eating it a row-boat went by with some people singing. After that she looked up at the stars and then, without knowing a thing about it, she fell asleep.

When she awoke a beautiful soft

pink blanket was over her, and Julian was seated in one of the big wicker chairs smoking a cigarette. When she saw him seated there, Vivette thought she surely was in a dream, and forced herself to call his name very softly.

"You must go to bed, Vivette," he had said with a spring to her, and without a word she had gotten up and gone with him down the steep steps, her hand in his. At the foot of the steps before he handed her over to the maid, he bent down and kissed her goodnight. Julian had never kissed her before and she trembled a little.

"You're a perfectly darling little girl, Vivette," he had said, "you shouldn't be at grown people's parties on yachts, but in a flower garden with the fairies!"

It was from that moment that Vivette had begun to dream of a big garden.

III

SHE was surprised by the entrance of Julian.

"And how is the Princess?" he asked brightly, coming forward with both hands extended.

Vivette was on her feet with her own hands behind her.

"Mamma isn't here, Julian!"

"I know! I came for a pair of gloves I left! Did you know I was getting very economical?"

"No! Were you at Sherry's?"

"A little while, yes! Won't you shake hands?"

"No, I don't care to, Julian! It's a very silly custom, I think!"

"So do I," Julian answered laughing. "May I talk to you a few moments before I go back to stupid old business?"

"No," Vivette had flushed, "I don't think it's best, Julian!"

Julian laughed brightly and as she took her seat airily he brought up a chair, and, as was his habit, took up both her hands.

"Why?" he asked, smiling into her eyes.

"There's a very good reason, Julian!"

"Tell it to me, Princess!"

"Do you remember the birthday party you gave Mamma last summer on your yacht?"

"You bet I do!"

"That was"—there was a little catch in her throat—"the most beautiful night I ever saw!"

"It was a beautiful night!" agreed Julian, still holding her hands and studying her with a smile in his eyes.

"Something happened to me that night, Julian!"

"What, kid?"

"I fell in love with you!"

Julian fell back with a very merry laugh.

"You *did*!" he exclaimed. "I'm awfully flattered! You wouldn't dare tell Harvey Reynolds about it!" he added, lifting a finger.

"Wouldn't?" flashed Vivette, "I don't like Harvey Reynolds! I don't like boys—I detest them! I just want to go away, Julian, and live in a flower garden!"

"You *darling*!"

She hid her face in her hands and the tears came.

"Don't cry, Vivette, don't!" he said, taking them down, and looking very intently at her.

"Oh! I won't!" she exclaimed and her smile seemed a bit of a wretched thing to Julian.

He moved his chair back and looked upon her, beginning at the expensive white shoes, noting the slender pink legs above the blue socks, her broad white ruffled skirts all spread out, the fairy-like body above them, the spiritual face with its silk blue eyes, topped by the thistle-down hair and bright flowered ribbon bow.

"Such a little maiden!" he said to himself, "such a dear little angel!"

He couldn't help telling her so. "Vivette," he said, "you're a sweet little angel!"

"I'm anything but an angel, Julian. I'd never be let in heaven—they'd turn me away at the gate!" and she laughed sweetly. "I believe I know more bad

things than any little girl in the world! You know what this place is—Papa and that foreign dancer and—" she paused and looked hard at him, "Mamma and you! You don't suppose for one instant, do you, that I don't *know*?"

Julian went pale. "Vivette, for the love of God, what are you saying? Let me tell you this! You're lying about your mother, do you understand, lying!"

"I'm not! I know! I've heard people talk—people think children are deaf, but they're not! I've even heard the servants talk! Now, do you think I'm an angel? Why, God wouldn't let one associate with me five minutes!"

"I tell you, Vivette, you are wrong about your mother, wrong! Listen to me! If I gave you my word of honor as a man, as a man you understand, would you believe me?"

She looked hopelessly bewildered at him.

"No!"

"You wouldn't believe me?"

"No!"

"You mean to say you believe I would lie to you, Vivette?"

"Yes. Mamma says everybody lies!"

"Your Mamma is wrong! Everybody doesn't lie! I don't! Listen to me! There isn't a word of truth in what you have heard about your mother. I swear it! Tell me you believe me!"

"I wish I could, Julian!" Her eyes were fixed upon him in wonder. "I'd give my life if Mamma wasn't all those things Papa tells her she is!"

"She isn't, baby," and Julian pressed her to him, "take that from me, she isn't!"

"Hello! Making love to Vivette, Julian?"

They were both on their feet, facing Vivette's mother.

"Yes," Julian exclaimed. "Mrs. Carroll," bowing very low, "I ask the hand of your daughter in marriage!"

"Go to your room, Vivette," said her mother sternly and the child with one swift, startled glance left quickly.

"Vivette is developing far too rapidly," said Mrs. Carroll to Julian as she threw aside her heavy coat. "We are thinking of sending her to a convent."

"For God's sake, Clare, do!"

"Why, what's the matter with you, pray? You are as white as a sheet!"

"Am I? I have a reason to be! Do you know what's happening here? We are murdering Vivette's soul, murdering it! Her little mind is chock-full of poison. She suspects *us*! Can you believe that? She, that child!"

"I must live my life, Julian! You don't expect me to sacrifice my happiness for her, do you?"

"You ought to—you're her mother, aren't you?"

"My God!" she fell away from him, breathless and angry. Then a laugh broke from her. "You're getting tired of me! I've known it for some time, and you want to use Vivette to rid yourself of me! All right, Julian, I'm game, but I can't say I admire the way you went about it!"

She walked up, slapped him in the face with the back of her gloved hand, then burst into tears and flung herself against him. "You're tired of me, that's all, tired of me!"

He pushed her from him rather brutally. He was still pale and suggested a resemblance of a spirited horse quivering from the plunge of a spur.

"I'm not, but I tell you this, I will be! I'll cut out and never see you again if you don't wake up to your duty to that child. There are other things in life for a man to consider outside of himself, and it's my duty now to think of Vivette since I've been a party to poisoning her mind!"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Go away somewhere with her alone and restore her faith in you! I've lied to her, now you go and carry out that lie, live it, and bring some hope in life to that bewildered, tortured little soul!"

"I believe you're in love with Vivette," she sneered.

"Say that to me again, and I'll walk

out of that door," and he pointed, "forever! In love with her! Who isn't in love with childhood! Of course, I'm in love with her! Vivette's a little angel whose wings we, you and I, are doing our best to scorch! That makes a man wake up!"

They stood, each defiant, and staring at one another.

And then Vivette herself entered with several clippings in her hand.

"I cut these out of a magazine, Mamma, and every one speaks of a garden. I came to ask Julian to beg you to write to-day! Mamma's going to send me to a convent, Julian!"

"You're very troublesome and naughty, Vivette! I'll write, never fear, and you can go too, and stay, that is, until you're tired of it, which will be after a week I suppose!"

"Oh! no, Mamma, I want to plant seeds and watch them come up and be flowers; that will take some time!"

Her mother swept past her out of the room.

"She's gone for a cocktail," said Vivette gravely, "she always does when I worry her! I'm glad, though, because I want to speak to you, Julian. See it through for me, will you? It really is best for me to go, because—"

"Because," his hands went out and took hers, "what, Vivette?"

"Because I'm afraid I really *am* in love with you!" And her arms were fast about his neck, heels pressed hard to the floor, the slender little legs looking very straight and pink above the blue socks.

"Of course, you are," exclaimed Julian, holding her close, "and I'm going," he pushed her from him and took her hands again, "to have it out with Harvey the first time we meet in a real fight like they have in the movies! What do you say to our going to the Strand this afternoon, you, I, and Mamma!"

"I'd just love it, Julian!"

"Well, go and get your little toggerly on!"

"All right, Julian!"

And she was out the door and up the steps on a run.

IV

IN the morning he saw her and her mother off on the train. One pair of eyes were set and hard, the other pair quivered through tears, eyes blue as pale violets with the dew on them.

"I'll plant a flower for you, Julian!" she called out of the window.

When the train was well out of the station she opened the box of chocolates he had brought her.

"Aren't they beauties, Mamma?"

Her mother freed herself of the impulsive clasp on her arm. "You musn't exclaim about things on trains, Vivette," she said.



SURPRISE

By George Briggs

SHE saw him standing on the street corner, waiting for a car. As she was on the other side of the street, she did not speak to him, but slackened her pace in the hope he would see her.

She was successful; he saw her and came across the street to join her. She quickened her steps, even though she knew he wished to speak to her, even though she knew he was pursuing her, even though she knew she wanted him to catch her.

She knew he was gaining upon her, that he was a few yards away. She knew who was about to speak to her.

He called her name.

"Adele," he said.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, startled, her hand upon her heart. "Oh! how you frightened me!"



TO MIRIAM

By Gerald Gibson

IN sunlight and in starlight, through days and nights of gladness,

Along the road to happiness we wandered hand in hand;

But now the sunlight's faded, the starlight sparkles never,

I've lost the road forever, and there's darkness through the land.

And it's oh, my heart is aching for the road that lies behind me,

Close hedged about with roses, and all sweet with honey dew;

But what keeps my heart from breaking, in its lone and restless longing,

Is the knowing that you'll keep the road—there's happiness for you.



THE DEAD AUTHOR COMES BACK

By Herman Landon

I THOUGHT I had become dead long enough to have become famous.

I had always been told that an author never wins recognition until he is very dead. I had been a dead one for twenty years, and I thought I would come back and see what fame felt like.

My coming back to life has been an eye-opener in more respects than one.

I find that during my absence they have taken from my desk my unfinished novel. "Molly Mollenkoph," and put a finish to it. They have called it "The Ups and Downs of Molly." First they ran it serially in Wiranhe's Magazine and sold a mil-

lion copies a month on the strength of it. I find that such illustrious thinkers as Dr. Parkhurst and Dorothy Dix have endorsed me and regretted my untimely demise. Someone has written a piece about me explaining how I always did my best work standing on one foot.

I have won fame, but there is a sting to it. They have taken my Molly—my Molly who was meant to exemplify the individualistic tendencies in the new woman—and made a white slave of her! They have held her up as a horrible example of what happens to typists who don't type!

Gosh! If this is fame I guess I'll go back!



SONG FOR A HARP

By Muna Lee

THE thought of you is taller than the sunset
Flaming up above the world's crumbling edges;
The thought of you is shyer than the lizard
In a cleft of the limestone ledges.

The thought of you is wilder than the wild birds,
Whose only joy is in their wild flying;
The thought of you is lovelier than starlight,
And sadder than a young child's dying.



YOUTH'S CALL

By Wyndham Martyn

LITTLE was one of those men who bear the postponement of an anticipated dinner as badly as some do family bereavement.

Winfield, the banker, whose guest he was, had motored him out to this roadhouse celebrated for its cuisine and then for some silly whim had decided that better entertainment could be obtained a half-hour's drive distant.

"It's an extraordinary thing," Little commented, "that after telling me so much of the chef's skill you should be content to go to a lesser place."

Winfield had behaved very oddly, he thought. At the door of the dining-room he had paused and declared the place was too crowded for enjoyment. One went to such places to be cheered by jocund crowds. Little mumbled all this and more as they drove to the less desirable place. Winfield made no defense, which was strange since he was of that domineering type which brooks no interference.

After Little had engulfed his cocktail with the air of a man who under no circumstances can be persuaded to enjoy himself, Winfield offered an explanation.

"It was not that the room was too crowded," he admitted. "The place is always full. The discriminating see to that."

"Do not trouble to explain," Little returned, still a trifle acidly. "I am your guest and I hope I am not complaining."

Ordinarily he would not have ventured to be disagreeable to a man of the banker's prominence, but even small dogs snap when big ones show no fight.

"There was only one disengaged table," Winfield went on. "It would have been very disagreeable for me to sit there."

He frowned at the recollection. "An old boyhood sweetheart of mine sent her son to me a year ago. I was not favorably impressed with the lad—he was one of your handsome, assured boys who think the kingdoms of the world are theirs for the asking—and I did not do as much as I should have done. He was at the table next to the one that would have been ours."

"It would not have affected my appetite," Little asserted, "and surely you could have sat with your back to him."

"He was with a girl, an ex-chorus girl, or at least what we always think an ex-chorus girl would look like, and they were drinking champagne. The boy has no money and he looked to me to have had more drink than he could carry. It would not have been a pleasant evening for me. I fear you have suffered some disappointment. Perhaps another night we can dine there."

Little was feeling already more contented. His host had ordered an elaborate meal and yet another dinner was in prospect. He felt that Winfield's feeling in the matter did him credit. He liked the touch of the old sweetheart of boyhood days. In his mind's eye he could see Winfield, domineering and arrogant even in youth, driving less courageous lads away and walking home with the belle of the school. The Winfields had no children. Perhaps the sight of this lad had opened an old wound.

Little felt he must make honorable amends for his display of irritation.

"Personally," he declared, "I like a quiet place like this. One gets better service."

Later he offered advice to the unusually silent Winfield.

"Boys are like that," he said sagely. "Have him come to your office and give him a calling-down. Surely in your mining properties there is some position for him? If not I might be able to do something for him."

"I think I will see him," Winfield said. "It was my intention to use him in those Bolivian mines; he has been technically trained."

II

At eleven the next morning, Robert Harris, in reply to a telegram, came into Winfield's bank and was shown into the president's office. He was still in the grip of a headache and rather dreaded an interview with the austere banker. He was a handsome youth of that type which persists through dissipations in preserving something of youth's magic.

"Have you any idea why I have sent for you?" the banker demanded.

"I can't imagine, sir," said the younger man. "When I came here a year ago you would do nothing for me. I couldn't help feeling that you were prejudiced against me."

"If I helped all who ask, I should have no time to attend to my own affairs."

Harris flushed.

"I was not asking help. I came to you as my mother's old friend to offer you my services in any capacity you chose to name. I did well enough at 'tech' to show you I had something in me. You turned me down cold."

"It never occurred to you that I might desire to test you? The men who are with me have all been tested. Perhaps I wanted to see how you would fare if you had to make your way without favor or introduction."

The remembrance of the bitter struggles he had had to gain a living during

the past year and the lack of success he had made of it was not pleasant to think of. If Mr. Winfield had been testing him the result would hardly beget confidence.

"A good word from you, sir," he declared, "would have helped me to get somewhere. As it is I have done nothing. For two months now I've been out of a job and I'm thinking of going out west as foreman of a gang of niggers and wops."

"How have you been living?" Winfield asked.

"My mother has sent me what she could spare."

Winfield thought for a moment.

"Doesn't your married sister live with her? And the two grandchildren?"

The lad nodded. "My mother is a wonder."

"And every cent she sends you is hard to spare?"

Harris had forgotten for the moment this cross-examination. He was thinking of the woman who believed in him and in every one of her cheerful letters prophesied success. She had always held that Winfield would make him a rich man. Perhaps she was right. Perhaps this severe, smileless mien was the mask the financier wore to hide the real kindness of his heart from onlookers. There must be something in him of value or his mother would not have liked him.

"Mother does without everything so that we can have what we need."

Winfield looked into the eager, young, handsome face and smiled.

"So you prove yourself a worthy son by opening champagne for chorus girls!"

"I don't know what you mean," Harris cried, a trifle too tardily to be convincing.

"I mean," Winfield said looking at him dourly, "that last night I chanced to be at the Soundview. I saw you opening champagne for the type of woman that men, I believe, call 'chickens'. You surely are not going to deny being there?"

"I was there," Harris admitted, "but she isn't a chorus girl."

"May I ask on whom you expended your mother's money, then?"

Harris shifted uneasily in his chair.

"As a matter of fact I was her guest, Mr. Winfield."

"I see," said the banker, "she was perhaps the wife of some friend of yours?"

Harris felt he had better tell the truth. Winfield had a way that crushed the spirit of opposition. He was a man accustomed to ruling. The younger could not rid himself of the impression that frankness might help him.

"As a matter of fact," he confessed, "she isn't married. I did her a small service and she asked me to dinner. And I may tell you it's many a day since I was asked to a decent dinner or had anyone show me a kindness like that."

Winfield was silent for a moment.

"Is it usual for unmarried women to invite men to dine with them and foot the bill?"

"You don't understand, sir," the other cried.

"Perhaps not," the banker conceded, "I have always understood that men who accept such invitations are not welcomed by decent people."

"You've no right to say that," Harris cried angrily. "I'm not that type of man. I tell you I did this girl a service. She had a red Chow dog that would have been run over if I hadn't grabbed it from under the wheels of a truck. That's how it all began."

"Then there was more than this dinner?" the elder queried.

The lad flushed. It was plain he was embarrassed.

"I've been to see her once or twice," he admitted.

"With her parents' approval, of course?"

"She hasn't any parents," he said slowly. "She lives alone."

"Rich girls often do," the other commented. "This is the age of woman's complete emancipation."

"But she isn't rich," Harris said. It

was plain he was disinclined to explain.

"It is obvious," Mr. Winfield observed dryly, "that poor girls do not keep red Chow dogs or open champagne. I am afraid you are keeping something back. Of course, there is no need for you to answer. It is not my function to cross-examine you. I do not wish to be offensive, but I must revert to my former opinion that she is of the ex-chorus girl class."

"She's a good girl," the other insisted, vehemently. He paused a moment, as though deciding how much he dare confide in the banker.

"Indeed?" Winfield's tones were insulting.

"If I had the money I'd marry her to-morrow," Harris declared.

"But would she marry you?" he was asked.

"She's crazy to," the boy asserted.

"You do not lack confidence," Winfield returned.

"She's just as lonely as I am," Harris said. "She doesn't know a soul and I don't either. She doesn't because," he paused, "well, I may as well tell you, she doesn't because the man who pays her bills is old and jealous. I don't know anyone because I'm poor. If you had given me a chance instead of this damn fool testing stunt I might have had a chance to live as other men I used to know do. As it is, when I rescued her dog and we sat there in the park and talked I felt I'd found a friend. And I may tell you I was lonely enough to have jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge."

"And you believed her when she said she had no friends? I have never posed as a man of the half-world, but even to me such a thing seems preposterous. She met you by accident, cultivated your acquaintance and asked you to visit at the apartment which some old man has furnished for her. Because of your overweening confidence you assume you are the only one to be favored."

"Indeed you are wrong," the other said earnestly. "She isn't that sort. You say you saw her. Isn't she the

prettiest thing you ever laid eyes on? And she's not the kind you say she is at all. She told me all about herself, how she tried to work and was starving when the man offered to set her up so she could live in comfort. I understood because I've been down and out, too. She's too much frightened of this man to run any risk of having him find out anything. She has told me everything."

"What's the man's name?" Winfield asked.

"Wallace," Harris said readily. "A Mr. William Wallace, a broker."

"What would your mother think of this friendship?"

Harris looked down; he did not care to meet the other man's eye.

"It wouldn't be easy to explain," he admitted.

"Robert," the banker said in a kinder tone. "Do you know why I have asked you to come here to-day? It's because I have been thinking I have failed your mother. She asked me to look after you. I ought to have done so. Through my fault you have become entangled with this woman. It may be she is all you think her. The odds are against it. You know she is not what your mother or sisters would call a good woman. You know it would break your mother's heart to find out your relations with her. Can you tell me truthfully that you could take her down to that little house at Fairhaven and say, 'Mother I have brought you another daughter'?"

"I don't see what it has to do with you," the boy said sullenly. "You have never been as lonely and friendless as I was."

"It has more to do with me than you think," Winfield said in this new and kindlier tone, "I want you to make a man of yourself. I want you to use your talents. I want your mother to be proud of you."

"It doesn't cost much to say those things," Harris sneered, "and you seem to have forgotten that when I came to you a year ago you gave me about one minute of your time and grudged that. Mother wouldn't believe it. She said

I must have talked too much about my abilities. As a matter of fact, you did all the talking."

"I had nothing then to offer you. I sent for you to-day because there is a prospect in view."

Harris looked up at him eagerly.

"Work for me?" he sighed. "That sounds too good to be true."

"I have mining properties in Bolivia," the banker said. "I need an assistant superintendent. I need him at once. In fact I need him to sail to-morrow morning. I've had you in mind. It's a big opportunity, Robert. It means you will be away for three years, but your pay will be good and your future prospects dependent on yourself. What do you say?"

"I can't say anything," the other cried. "If you knew how I've longed for just such a chance, Mr. Winfield! I thank you a million times."

"There are conditions," Winfield reminded him. "The position is yours only if you accept them."

Harris looked at him anxiously.

"What do you mean?"

"That you must give up this woman absolutely. That you must give me your word of honor not to see her or write to her again. Money will be advanced to you to get yourself clothes and an outfit and go to a hotel till you sail. If you try to seek her out to say good-bye, you remain in New York so far as I am concerned. You will certainly not get a position through me."

Harris looked troubled.

"I understand your point of view," he said slowly. "And I suppose I ought to cut all that sort of thing out, but you make it very hard for me. You see, Mr. Winfield, she has been so kind to me, such a good little pal with it all. Sometimes I've been cold and half-starved and I've gone up to her apartment feeling I should never get on. And I've come away feeling I had strength to win out. She always says I shall do big things. How can I go away without a word? If I did what would she think of me? You see, we're fond of one another."

He received scant comfort from the banker's expression. It was stern and austere. Men of his high type, the boy reflected, could never understand. To Winfield the whole affair must seem a wretched intrigue without a shadow of excuse for its existence.

"In this thing," the elder man said slowly, "your mother and I stand on one side; on the other there is this chance acquaintance, this woman whom you would not desire your mother to meet. On the one side are the professional opportunities for which your mother has pinched herself to have you trained. On the other you are offered the hospitality of a woman who may throw you aside when she meets a better looking man. I have already given you more of my time than I can well afford. Will you answer me at once?"

"Of course, I've got to accept," Harris said haltingly. "I will neither see her, nor 'phone, nor write, but I shall always feel a cad for leaving her like this. What will she think of me?"

Winfield considered the matter for a while.

"I feel that I can't very well excuse your behavior," he said, "but I can at least understand your reluctance to go without letting her know. I will do this for you. I will see her, if you will give me her name and address, and tell her I forced you to go. I will take the blame."

He pressed a button as the boy was thanking him. It was plain he did not desire any show of gratitude.

"Put the name and address on this pad," he commanded.

When a man entered he introduced Harris to him.

"Mr. Harris leaves on the steamer to-morrow as assistant superintendent of the Tulum Mines. He will need some money. Give him what he wants and introduce him to the men going with him."

The new assistant superintendent found himself dismissed with a cold smile and a nerveless hand-clasp.

III

THAT same evening Winfield made his way to the address that Robert Harris had written down for him. It was a brown-stone residence, just east of Madison avenue, the top floors of which were called studios. It had been a big mansion and the uncommon size of the rooms in a measure atoned for the lack of elevator service.

At the top of the house Winfield paused before a door to which was attached a quaint brass knocker.

Since there was no response to his gentle tapping, he tried the handle and found the door opened easily. He was in a big lofty room lighted by two windows and a skylight. Before an open fire—for the autumn afternoons were chilly—sat the pretty girl he had seen with Harris at the Soundview Inn. The friendly red Chow awoke at Winfield's entrance and wagged his bushy tail amicably and showed his black throat in a yawn.

The room was beautifully furnished with rare rugs and well-chosen pictures. There was no note of poor taste in its decoration. It might have been the studio of a rich girl who painted for the love of it.

Winfield neither asked permission to seat himself nor to smoke. The girl looked at him as though astonished at his silence.

"So you describe me to your chance acquaintances as an 'old and jealous' man! At fifty-three I do not consider myself old."

"What do you mean?" the girl demanded nervously.

"Merely that your Antinoüs will soon be on his way to a distant shore, where for three years he will have a chance to make good."

"How, how did you find out?" she cried.

"I didn't go to Boston last night as I intended. Little came to New York instead and I promised him a dinner at the Soundview. I saw you there with my godson."

Winfield puffed at his cigar. His

temper seemed admirably under control.

"There is a certain ingenuousness about youth that makes it easily the prey of one like me who is 'old and jealous.' He confided everything in me. Perhaps he was less a victim to your charms than you hoped. Young men as good looking as he encounter many women who proffer friendship. Perhaps you shared him with those you do not know."

"Well?" she said presently, "what are you going to do?"

"At present, nothing," he answered, "but I may trust you less in future. I've been pretty good to you, Vera, and you would be wise to be more discreet in future."

He stooped to pat the red Chow which sat open-mouthed by his chair.

"We're both of us fond of Shantung," he observed quietly, "and wish him long life. But," and he looked at her with a slight smile, "it will cost you less another time to sacrifice him under the wheels of a truck than it will to lose me."



THIS FEVER CALLED LIVING

By Harry C. Black

HAVE you ever noticed that all the great temptations are circular in form? A bottle is round, and so are women's waists and garters.

* * *

GOOD breeding is the art of feeling superior to one's neighbor without knowing why.

* * *

NO spinster is ever as happy as some wives, and no married man is ever as happy as some bachelors.

* * *

CONCEIT is the greatest of labor-saving devices. It makes us believe we already are what we wish to become.

* * *

SELFISHNESS is the art of making others enjoy doing for you the things you dislike doing for yourself.

* * *

THE sins of the fathers have at least one merit: they are always free of inheritance taxes.

* * *

AGENTLEMAN is one who, if he doesn't believe in God, still doesn't think it necessary to keep his hat on in church to prove it.

* * *

EXCLUSIVENESS: the refuge of the unpopular.

* * *

IT can always be said in defense of animals that, though they haven't souls, they likewise haven't double chins.

* * *

THE uplift is based on the theory that, if a man insists upon butting his head against a stone wall, the thing to do is to tear down the wall.

SAUCE FOR THE EMPEROR*

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By John Chapin Mosher

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

NERO, *Emperor of Rome.*

MACRONIUS, *his favorite courtier at the moment.*

DONOR, *an ambitious young cook.*

TRITOR, *another cook.*

AGRIPPINA, *the wife of Cæsar.*

ADORA, *a Vestal Virgin.*

PAULA, *a young person of much charm and low station.*

IO
TRICANTHUS } *slaves in the house of Nero.*

Other retainers of Nero, Agrippina and Adora.

The scene is in a room in Cæsar's palace.

[*At the rise of the curtain, IO and TRICANTHUS cross the stage, carrying covered plates and salvers and trays of various description.*]

IO:

This is the seventh sauce the Emperor has tasted and ordered away to-day. Well, the worse for him, the better for us. Such is life.

TRICANTHUS:

If only his majesty's food continues to disagree with him, and the Lady Aglaia continues buying, we shall be rich soon.

IO:

He would have us flogged if he knew we were selling the food from his own table.

TRICANTHUS:

He is a great Emperor—may he live long.

* All acting and other rights are reserved by the author.

IO:

And also his dyspepsia.

TRICANTHUS:

No one but Cæsar could have thought of such a mode of discovering a new sauce. Was it not a droll idea to offer such a competition, to force any man who tried and failed to eat nothing but that sauce he had offered for the rest of his life?

IO:

Already twenty-nine have paid the penalty.

TRICANTHUS:

Two have committed suicide and five have gone mad.

IO:

Say, did you see the pretty girl in there just now?

TRICANTHUS:

This is no time to talk of women. We must hurry or the Lady Aglaia won't

buy our sauces, and we shall be so much the poorer.

[*A horn is heard outside.*]

IO:

Run, here comes the Emperor.

[*Exeunt IO and TRICANTHUS. Enter NERO, AGRIPPINA, ADORA, MACRONIUS and TRITOR, also PAULA and DONOR, who remain quietly in the rear at first.*]

NERO:

Young man, you realize the responsibility you've undertaken to offer a sauce to the Emperor?

TRITOR:

(*On his knees.*) To please you, Sire, has been the dream of my life.

NERO:

You are a loyal Roman. (*Looking at the sauce.*) It has a rich color.

TRITOR:

I was head cook in the house of Cleo the Egyptian.

NERO:

I shall taste it. (*Murmur throughout the court: "The Emperor tastes!"*)

DONOR:

(*In the background.*) If this should win the prize, and we should be just too late!

PAULA:

We won't be too late. No sauce is half as well flavored as yours.

DONOR:

Look at Tritor. Poor devil, it means as much to him as it does to us.

PAULA:

Not quite—anyway, I want you to win.

NERO:

I shall taste again. (*Murmur throughout the court: "He tastes again!"*)

TRITOR:

Most august majesty, most righteous judge.

DONOR:

I'm glad for Tritor's sake anyway; he's a good fellow.

PAULA:

Don't get sentimental, there is still hope.

[*Enter IO.*]

IO:

Sire, the heralds desire to know the progress of the contest so that they may inform the provinces.

NERO:

Can a man in public life have no peace? Macronius, you have nothing to do all day but think up beautiful thoughts. Give them a few, so that all the world may know how great is Caesar.

AGRIPPINA:

You are a martyr to your people.

IO:

They say, Sire, much dissension has arisen over your probable decision—betting and such immorality in the more remote portions of your empire.

NERO:

This is certainly a rich sauce. It may be the one.

ADORA:

Oh, I'm just dying to try it.

DONOR:

(*To PAULA.*) It's all up with us.

PAULA:

No, I know that you will win.

NERO:

(*Tasting again.*) Umm-m.

TRITOR:

That is the sweetest music in the world.

NERO:

What is that?

TRITOR:

Oh, Your Majesty, what is it?

AGRIPPINA:

My Liege, you are angry.

ADORA:

Poison—oh, I'm sure it's poison. I never was so excited in my life.

TRITOR:

Have you bitten your tongue?

NERO:

Caraway seed—there was certainly a caraway seed.

AGRIPPINA:

What an outrage!

TRITOR:

I did not know.

NERO:

You did not know! The rascal—take him out. Feed him his caraway seed all the rest of his life—I hope he enjoys it. Out with him!

ADORA:

It's the fault of these democratic days, when anyone can offer sauce to the Emperor.

DONOR:

(*Stepping forward.*) Sire, perhaps this of mine—

NERO:

Another? After all I have gone through to-day, am I to have no peace?

AGRIPPINA:

And such a bold-looking woman with him, too.

DONOR:

If you would, Sire, I have waited so long—

NERO:

Certainly not. (*Starts up.*)

PAULA:

(*To NERO.*) Your Majesty, let me speak for this youth. Let me tell you what this sauce is. It is no cheap, paltry concoction of spices and sweets, which any man can mix.

NERO:

Who are you?

PAULA:

My name is Paula.

ADORA:

I don't know what our young girls are coming to.

AGRIPPINA:

It just pains me to see a girl like that.

NERO:

You are beautiful.

AGRIPPINA:

Her cheeks look as though they were painted with red clay from the bottom of the Tiber.

PAULA:

Once before this sauce was made, and then a lady, feasting on it, was so charmed she forgot to meet her lover, and so stayed true to her husband. A famous Eastern monarch stabbed with a fruit knife his favorite wife because she interrupted him with a kiss when he first tasted it.

ADORA:

What a horrid scandal-monger! I don't believe a word of it!

NERO:

You are charming.

PAULA:

A Christian, recalling its flavor in the arena, forgot his vision of Paradise, and so perished in misery.

NERO:

I shall try this sauce.

PAULA:

Then in after years they will say of it, not that men died for it, or women stayed chaste for it, but rather that it is the sauce that pleased Caesar. (*With much ceremony PAULA feeds CAESAR the sauce herself out of a long gold spoon. His eyes are fixed always on hers.*)

NERO:

(*His eyes still on her.*) Yes, this is the sauce I have been looking for.

PAULA:

Taste once again, your most august majesty. (*She feeds the sauce to him again.*)

NERO:

The contest is closed. I have found the sauce. Agrippina, remember it is your duty to uphold the sanctity of the home. Go to your looms. My lady Adora, tell you vestal sisters you shall have the box you desire at the gladiatorial entertainments, and it shall be hung with pale green and lavender in accordance with the new art and your virginal complexions.

AGRIPPINA:

It doesn't matter what box one has nowadays, the circus is so dull—I don't mean to criticise, my Lord, but last week when the wife of the consul of Abyssinia visited us there were only six Christians in the arena, and the big wrestler from Britain, who was so well advertised and who made such a big hit in Marsalia, sprained his ankle and didn't kill a man. When it was all over, the consul's wife said: "Is that all?" before she thought. I was so humiliated!

NERO:

We'll throw the consul's wife to the lions if she doesn't look out.

ADORA:

I know lots of people who are Christians. That big blonde girl that lives around the corner and makes eyes at the senators, I'm sure is.

AGRIPPINA:

Really some very nice people are taking it up, of course in a really refined manner.

ADORA:

I don't object to that at all, my dear. I always say everyone has a right to his own ideas. But I do think we won't have any morals left if we forget about the Lupercalia and the Eleusinian rites. I'm sure my life would mean nothing without them. And, my dear, what will happen to the ideal of the home if this

love-your-neighbor idea becomes popular?

NERO:

Well, ladies, now that we have found a lot of good reasons for sticking to the ideas that are most convenient to us, we had better close the discussion. I have affairs of state to 'tend to.

ADORA:

Farewell, most gracious, royal son of gods. (*Exeunt AGRIPPINA and ADORA, with their suites. With a nod NERO signifies that his own suite follow, leaving DONOR and PAULA.*)

PAULA:

Then, Sire, you—?

NERO:

Why, here, you're not going, too, are you?

PAULA:

I thought you said you had affairs of state—

NERO:

My dear girl, affairs of state are to a monarch what a grandmother's funeral is to certain of our retainers. Come here.

PAULA:

Sire?

DONOR:

If my sauce has pleased you, I am the proudest of men.

NERO:

Who is this man, pray?

DONOR:

Why, I—

PAULA:

He made the sauce you have been good enough to find palatable.

NERO:

I had forgotten about him. Well, what do you want now?

DONOR:

I was hoping you might tell me my reward for the sauce.

NERO:

You look like a man who spent most of his time hoping things. Well, can't you see that I am busy now?

DONOR:

Come, Paula, we shall return when Cæsar wills it.

NERO:

Young man, you are not especially clever, I conjecture. Wait in the ante-chamber until I summon you. This lady and I have matters of moment to discuss.

DONOR:

As you will, Sire. (*Exit DONOR.*)

NERO:

Dear me, how stupid people are!

PAULA:

How can I serve your majesty?

NERO:

You are beautiful.

PAULA:

Cæsar!

NERO:

Listen, my darling. I have a villa in Sicily that only three men in Rome know of. It is built of granite blue as the faces of the Nazarene martyrs we made torches of in our gardens last year. There is a peristyle of bronze and a bath of green jade. And there are a hundred slaves and acres of vineyards, fountains that Arethusa would love and pools that Narcissus would not need to see the face of to leap into them. The gardens the king built long ago for his queen in Babylon were not so fair as is Cæsar's palace in Sicily. Even I have never been able to write a song that did justice to that house of mine.

PAULA:

And the last lady who was mistress there was given a bouquet of roses, the poisoned fumes of which stifled her in her bed.

NERO:

How do you know that? Do you in-

sinuate that Cæsar was responsible for any misfortune that may have occurred?

PAULA:

No subject, Sire, honors you so much as I. But to live in kings' houses makes one much envied, and to be envied, Sire, is a dangerous luxury.

NERO:

There is doubtless much wisdom in what you say, but surely you would run that risk if I told you that I loved you. Do you hear that? Cæsar himself says he loves you.

PAULA:

This is indeed a great honor. I am truly blessed among women.

NERO:

You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. You are more lovely than that little Greek girl who killed herself for love of me. You are worthy of my love.

PAULA:

No, Cæsar, that I cannot believe. It is too great a splendor for me. You had best send me back to my father's farm on the hillside of the Alps. I would not become such a lofty position.

NERO:

You'll get used to it soon enough. I never met a woman yet who had any trouble that way. I shall tell Agrippina that my nerves need a rest. It's perfectly true. I was thinking the other day how important it was for the welfare of the empire that I should not overstrain. We shall sail for Sicily tomorrow.

PAULA:

Oh, I never dreamt that this would happen.

NERO:

You have never done yourself justice, my dear. You get your blue eyes from some northern ancestry, I imagine. Those old wiseacres may scold all they want about the barbarian invasions, but I say if they will bring us eyes like those, let them come.

PAULA:

Oh, Donor—what will he do?

NERO:

What did you say? Who is Donor?

PAULA:

No one, Sire, of any importance, only the man who made the sauce for you.

NERO:

You say the man made the one sauce I have been able to eat in weeks is a man of no importance? My dear, you are so young. It is quite charming of you. But don't worry about him, he shall go with us.

PAULA:

Go with us?

NERO:

Certainly—to Sicily. We've got to have someone to cook for us. Though, come to think of it, I'm not sure it wasn't the way it was served that made it so delicious. What do you say to that, my little one?

PAULA:

Most august Lord, I beg you, let me speak—you have done me such great honor I know not what to say—but, oh, Sire, I am only a peasant girl—I cannot fill the position you offer. I shall be grateful to you all my life. I shall teach my daughters to weave the deeds of Cæsar into their embroideries so that all posterity may know how kingly he was, and I shall train my sons to model their hearts after Cæsar's, and to fight for him, and better to live and work for him, but this, my Lord, I cannot do.

NERO:

Anyone can do anything Cæsar wishes. I fear you do not realize the circumstances.

PAULA:

Only the rarest women of the earth, the daughters of kings and great chieftains, are fit for the first ruler of the world.

NERO:

We have been all over that before.

After all, it is for me to decide who is worthy of me and who isn't. Well, in my opinion you are quite up to the standard. And you must get over that illusion of the superiority of royalty. Look at Agrippina. Come kiss me, little one.

PAULA:

I cannot.

NERO:

This obsession of yours is tiresome. After all, I am a human being, not a god.

PAULA:

I won't kiss you.

NERO:

Cunning, I like your spirit. But come, we can't play away the whole day—pretty, pretty, cutey, cutey.

PAULA:

You can't kiss me—I won't let you kiss me—I mean it—I shall die first.

NERO:

She is certainly out of her head. Come, dear, don't you recognize me? It is Cæsar, Nero Cæsar—whom every woman loves—and he loves you.

PAULA:

Yes—of course—I know you—what a fool I am—I don't know what I am saying. Certainly I love you. Kiss me—there—I am—a little—faint—that is because I love you so.

NERO:

Adorable, you are so innocent, so young—oh, we shall be so happy in Sicily.

PAULA:

Yes, so very happy—in Sicily. But now I must leave you to tell my family how much honored is their daughter.

NERO:

Yes, I can see that you are wearied. Macronius will show you your apartment in the palace.

PAULA:

But I must leave the palace for a moment—to get ready for our journey.

NERO:

I shall supply all you need, of course. And the Emperor's own heralds shall inform your parents. Macronius! *(He steps to the doorway and calls again.)* Macronius!

[Enter MACRONIUS. *He makes obeisance to the Emperor, ignoring PAULA.*]

NERO:

This lady remains in the palace. Show her all honor—all honor. You understand, Macronius?

[MACRONIUS *wheels about and faces PAULA. He stares at her a moment in amazement, and then suddenly the Emperor's meaning dawns on him. Instantly he bows low.*]

MACRONIUS:

(Bows.) Most gracious lady, I am your slave. Is it your pleasure to withdraw now to your apartments?

NERO:

It is.

MACRONIUS:

So? By the way, Your Majesty, the cook of the new sauce apparently has the hardihood to expect some further notice from you.

NERO:

Yes, I shall see him now.

[MACRONIUS, *with a bow to PAULA and NERO, leaves the room.*]

PAULA:

I implore you—let this be your first gift to me—say nothing of this to Donor.

NERO:

Charming little lady, I was merely going to give him news that will make him the happiest and proudest of young men. *(Enter DONOR and MACRONIUS.)* How do you do, young man? I feel that the service you have done your country deserves my especial recommendation. You are not yet thirty, I venture. Many fellows of your age are still under-scutlions in the kitchens of my prætors, but you are to be first

cook in the house of your Emperor. He himself is to test your genius.

DONOR:

It is the ambition of my life.

NERO:

A worthy one. Cooking is the one art that does not have to excuse itself with a philosophy. If I had more leisure I would cook instead of write poetry, but it requires so much more study. Well, well, however that may be, be ready to sail to-morrow.

DONOR:

To sail?

NERO:

I am leaving Rome for a short respite from the—ah—the tribulations of the throne. Uneasy, my dear Macronius, lies the head that wears a crown. Fair line, that—almost worthy of my sonnets. No, I guess it is too obvious—the kind of thing that might appeal to the vulgar taste. Yes, young man, we sail to-morrow to Sicily.

DONOR:

Sicily?

PAULA:

Cæsar—

NERO:

Young man, you are to have the honor, not only of serving your Emperor, but also the infinite honor of serving the lady your Emperor loves.

DONOR:

That is wonderful—and the lady goes with you to-morrow? Sire, this is an opportunity too glorious! Oh, the gods are good to me, indeed. And I shall serve you, Sire, such dishes as would ravish the god of love himself. The lady shall have sweetmeats such as no other lady has ever eaten, delicacies rare as jewels. Perhaps I might ask her what are her favorite flavorings. I have a way of frying snails that no other master has ever succeeded in. And my cheese cakes—oh, I am sure the lady will like my cheese cakes. As for my honey tarts—oh, rich! Then

goose eggs prepared with pastry—my last master always had them at his feasts, and for you I shall make doubly luscious. I have a way of fixing apples, too, so that when you press them just a little they will squirt saffron water into your face—a pretty idea, you know, and if a party is at all stiff it loosens things up splendidly. For a roast, sow's breasts—perhaps she would prefer hare, fixed regally with feathers in its back?

NERO:

That's the spirit! Do you prefer hare or sows' breasts, Paula?

PAULA:

You are torturing me.

DONOR:

What does it matter about her? Why do you ask her?

NERO:

Well, she is the lady concerned.

DONOR:

Paula!

[Enter Io. He quietly crosses the stage to the table on which is the sauce, and lifts it to carry it out.]

NERO:

What are you doing with that?

Io:

I thought you were through with it, Your Majesty—I beg your pardon, I am—very—sorry—

NERO:

Am I to be starved to death in my own palace?

Io:

It is my mistake. I—I—she wanted it especially, as it was the prize sauce, Sire—and so—and so—I'll put it here, shall I, Your Majesty?

NERO:

And who may She be, who is inveigling my servants to snatch the food from my very mouth? Your sweetheart, I suppose, some horse-haired vixen!

Io:

Oh, no, Sire, it is a lady, Your Majesty— She thinks, Sire, that dishes from your table bring her good luck.

NERO:

That explains it. I can understand how a woman might reason in that way. What is her name?

Io:

Aglaia—she is new to Rome.

NERO:

A patrician name. Well—well—we shall see—leave that sauce there for the present. (Io puts it down and exits.) Paula, my dear, have you given this man your orders? Remember you may command anything in the world—the whole object of our foreign conquests has been merely to add new delicacies to my menu.

PAULA:

Sire—this man and I—we were to be married—don't you understand what that means—I fear—oh, I fear he might not cook as well, if—if—you—take me from him.

NERO:

So that's the case, is it? I am sure he could want nothing better than to cook for you, then—express his passion in the pastry, so to speak.

DONOR:

You won't take her from me—not if you were Emperor of the world. She is mine—mine—only over my dead body—

NERO:

A trifling stipulation. But we can't bother about that now. Take him out, Macronius.

DONOR:

Come on and try it.

MACRONIUS:

Perhaps I had better call the guards.

NERO:

Call Semprinus; he is just back from the army in the East and can manage him.

MACRONIUS:

Semprinus is not in the palace at present.

NERO:

Where is he, then?

MACRONIUS:

In attendance, Sire, I fear, of a lady. He is losing all sense of duty, Sire.

NERO:

Semprinus a suitor of a lady? And what woman has gotten him in her toils?

MACRONIUS:

I suspect it is that same Lady Aglaia who desires your sauces.

NERO:

Aglaia again?

MACRONIUS:

Rascal, have you no respect for your Emperor? Out with you!

[Enter ADORA in great excitement.]

NERO:

What is this—more gossip!

ADORA:

Sire, I have been insulted—grossly insulted. I rushed right back to put the matter in your hands. Never in my life have I known of such a thing—and after the life I've led—always kept up my position—no one has ever been able to say a word against the Vestal Virgins—except those horrid scandals, which everyone knows aren't true—and I'm sure I've always put down my thumbs at the circus just as you wanted and never complained a bit if the hangings weren't as good as the last Emperor had them—I don't mind things like that a bit—but when it comes to being held up half an hour in the streets in front of that woman's house, I felt it my duty to tell you, Sire, what was going on in Rome,—actually in Rome.

NERO:

Someone insulted you—fancy that now!

ADORA:

Just now as I was returning to the temple, after departing from your poor dear wife—though I do think she ought to use that frankincense and myrrh stuff that the wise man brought from the East; it makes a splendid reducing ointment—well, my lackeys were hurrying me back, and I was deep in the thought of what a truly noble city your infinite wisdom had made Rome, when suddenly my chair stopped. I peered forth, chastely, from behind my curtains, as becomes a woman of my station, and to my amazement I saw a long line of chairs, and they were chairs of the patricians, Sire. I bade my slaves find who dared to block the passage of a Vestal Virgin. He returned and told me—I blush—I simply cannot continue—yes, it is my duty. That blockade, Your Majesty, was due to the crowds who were arriving at the house of that woman who has just come to Rome—the creature who makes her disgusting eyes at the very senators.

NERO:

You mean to tell me that the street was blocked with the chariots of the visitors of a woman—?

ADORA:

You are no more shocked than I am. I said to my slaves at once: "Take me back to the Emperor." I said, "He shall know of this at once." In my opinion such license can only be explained by Christianity.

NERO:

Macronius, you haven't told me about this woman.

MACRONIUS:

I didn't think you would be interested—

NERO:

Don't you know how close to my heart is the morality of Rome?

ADORA:

They say that my Lord Macronius's own chariot sometimes attends there.

NERO:

So that's how the land lies. Oh, Macronius, Macronius—Et tu, Macronius!

[Enter IO, TRICANTHUS and other slaves, bearing salvers, bowls, trays, of all shapes and sizes. They solemnly arrange them on the table and then turn and face the Emperor.]

IO:

Sire, I have them all back.

NERO:

What are these?

IO:

All the sauces, Sire. I bought them back from the Lady Aglaia.

ADORA:

That is the creature's name.

NERO:

And were none of them eaten?

IO:

Fortunately, the lady is of such charm that no one can think of anything but of herself when in her house.

PAULA:

(To DONOR.) There is nothing we can do. We are powerless. But I shall throw myself from the galley into the sea.

DONOR:

And I shall swim out after you, until strength leaves me, and then I shall sink into your arms.

MACRONIUS:

(Aside to DONOR.) How dare you whisper to that lady, your presence is an insult to her.

NERO:

Dear Lady Adora, if you will leave us now, I think we can cope with this problem.

ADORA:

I shall go home a different way, you may be sure.

NERO:

She will feel that deeply, I am sure. (Exit ADORA.) Oh, Macronius, Macronius, a woman in Rome who makes a riot in the streets and Cæsar is the last to hear it. Where is your patriotism now, I wonder? And you would send me to a desert island so that you could have a clear field. They do not eat my sauces, because she is so fair. Think of that now—Macronius, quick, hand me that sauce. With my own hands I shall bear it to her.

MACRONIUS:

But the Lady Paula—?

NERO:

I have never heard of any riots in the Alps where she comes from. Paula, my dear, don't do what that little Greek girl did. Rather follow your kitchen scullion to his pots and ewers. At all events, my very nice little one, be grateful to us for making you first lady of the world, if only for an hour— Hand me that salver, Macronius, and follow. Aglaia—Aglaia—charming name. On the way over think up some rhymes for it, we must immortalize it in verse—Aglaia—Aglaia—and they would separate us—whom love has—joined, no man shall sunder. Remember that, Macronius. Aglaia—

[Exit NERO in state, holding the salver high before him which holds DONOR's sauce, followed by MACRONIUS and the slaves, all now in different to PAULA and DONOR.]

DONOR:

(Throwing his arms about PAULA in passionate embrace of love and relief.) We are free, my darling! Thank God! Oh, we shall be happy now, forever. We owe it all to that strange woman who must be so beautiful, the Lady Aglaia—my dearest, are you not happy?

PAULA:

(Slowly.) I don't believe she is a bit more beautiful than I am. Her nose is curved like a boat-hook.

CURTAIN

THE SIX BEST SEÑORITAS

By J. Kenyon Nicholson

Hic Jacet
MARJORIE
(1895—1897)

I T was Marjorie who told me that there wasn't any Santa Claus. I was just six at the time, and even now I can recall the pang she gave me. But then she was always shocking me. We were playing "house" one day out in the sand in her backyard when she calmly informed me that when she grew up she was going to marry me. And in my innocence I believed her, from that time forth becoming her abject slave in preparation of the day. When there were green apples to be got, or when she needed someone to fetch and carry her dolls, she always ordered me. I was a sort of man Friday. Her passionate fondness for soda-water made me break the eighth commandment. To please her I kept my nickel from the Sunday-school contribution plate, offering it later that she might stop in at the confectioner's on the way home for something frothy and pink. Our little sandpile paradise might have gone on forever but for a city cousin. For his yellow curls and ball-bearing roller skates she betrayed me. So that at the early age of eight I was left, for the first time, the acute angle of the eternal triangle.

Hic Jacet
MADGE
(1911—1912)

If Madge hadn't pledged herself to quit the world we'd have been married and had most of our furniture paid for

'ere this. Heaven knows when she became afflicted, but she was as rank a Socialist as ever lectured from atop a soap-box in Madison Square. Karl Marx was her Bible. She had me read him until I was groggy. We were in the University at the same time. She had no more taste than a Hottentot in the matter of clothes, but she had an intoxicating charm that needs no external aid, nor abatement.

My only rival was an Economics professor, whose pedagogic devotion to her was pathetic. Upon the assumption that all's fair in love and war he flunked me. When I would ask Madge to the opera she would usually have to attend an equal suffrage meeting. If I wanted to take her off for a day in the woods she would have to go down in some dingy settlement and uplift a bit among the dregs of the melting pot. Besides, she was the birth-control editor of some sort of feminist journal.

One day after lunch with Emma Goldman she decided to end it all—that is, as far as either the prof. or I was concerned. To save time, so that she could get to a meeting of the Garment Workers' strikers, she invited us both to tea, giving us our honorable discharges together. She had analyzed her feeling, she said, and though she liked us both enormously, still we appealed merely to her maternal instincts. She was looking for a mate who would be worthy of her steel; one who was virile, who could eat raw beefsteak, and who could fight either for or with her.

Thus Madge passed out of the picture. . . . I saw her one night not long since in Fourteenth Street, among her people, as she used to call the muckers. She was pushing a cart filled with

babies, while by her side, but slightly in front of her, walked the Man; virile, beef-eating, a bruiser. Madge had met him while out uplifting one night at the Steam Fitters' Ball.

She had found her cave man.

Hic Jacet
NATALIE
(1912—1913)

Natalie was too expensive. It wasn't the original cost but the upkeep. She was the kind who is to be won only with a steady bombardment of compliments, candy, orchids, theatre tickets, and dinners. I am still paying the price. Too many suitors telling her of her witcheries had given her a distorted idea of herself, for she couldn't pass a mirror without spasmodically powdering her nose. She would rather have been *chic* than president. But withal, Natalie was an adorable little snob, even though she didn't like Lincoln because his hair always looked mussed in his pictures.

One night when I had her at bay behind a bank of café palms I lifted my voice above the strumming of the ukeleles and pictured to her the classical little rose-clad cottage away from the city's sham and tinsel. But the man who gets her will have to work differently. She frankly confessed to me that the greatest moment of her life was when Vernon Castle had asked her for a dance. Her summers were spent largely at Long Beach, while in winter she lived in the Domino Room at Bستانoby's. If it was "being done," trust that Natalie was doing it. When I told her that I was almost bankrupt she tossed her marcelled head in the air, and asked me why I hadn't become financially able before I had tried to go in her set.

Hic Jacet
EVA
(1913—1913)

For two weeks Eva made me so

happy that I thought seriously of giving her that job for life. To tell the truth, I did propose. But then it was August, and there was a moon, and a wave-lapped shore. She knew that I had my fingers crossed, the little minx. We were stopping at the same hotel. The second night I spent in her company she told me of ambitions in the movie world. An actor had once told her that she would photograph well. And did I think so, too? I spoke encouraging words and she began to call me by my first name. She straightened my necktie and asked me if I would teach her to swim. So next day in the boiling sun I held her head above water while she splashed and spluttered. But she did not learn. She would not learn. She derived too much pleasure from being taught. Eva would soothe my sunburned neck and shoulders with cold cream, and our friendship grew and grew.

Then she began to talk indefinitely of the future, at odd times taking a leatherette edition of the Rubaiyat from her vanity case, quoting passages. . . . The second week-end saw the close of our little romance. I had noticed that she was becoming worried, even reticent. Then it came like a bolt from the blue, on the Saturday afternoon train from town, with a valise in one hand and a fishing rod in the other. It was her husband.

Hic Jacet
PHYLLIS
(1914—1915)

A strange contradiction was Phyllis. She looked as demure as the lady on Baker's cocoa cans, but the way she kissed with half-parted lips gave me the uncomfortable feeling that I was dealing with no mere dilettante. When I told her she looked like Elsie Ferguson she looked straight into my eyes and asked me who *she* was. And didn't laugh, either. Phyllis was a conscientious little soul. When she was still in pig-tails she had started to wade

through her Baptist father's theological library. When I knew her she had read around as far as the horsehair sofa, and was still going strong. One of my first duties after being introduced to her was to write in her autograph album. Her passion for serving suppers at church socials seemed insatiable. She never looked prettier than when, flushed from the sheer excitement of the thing, she would go tripping across the red-carpeted floor of the damp church parlor with a tray of something. When we would sit alone before the gas logs in her father's library on long winter evenings she would wax sentimental and I would grow sleepy. . . . One night she came out of her Baptist shell and proposed to me in a manner that would have done G. B. Shaw's heart good to hear. I smoothed it over as best I could, but I never went back again. I had become coy. Phyllis would have made my grandfather an excellent wife.

ELVIDA
(1916—)

Last month, at a houseparty, I met

Elvida. When I first heard her name I thought they were speaking of a Pullman car. She hails from an almost unspeakable place: Schenectady. If I must be frank, she is not good looking, quite to the contrary; but then Hickson makes her gowns. Our first dance was a fizzle; from the first she insisted upon leading, even though we were dancing a fox-trot to one-step music.

Usually Elvida's conversations are as dull as ditch water, but then anyone can be clever nowadays if he can remember what he reads. Her riding is not to be bragged about, but she drives her own Marmon divinely. Her maid told my tailor's apprentice that she snores something "terribul," but for that matter so do I. And I like her father. Elvida, poor dear, has tried to disguise it in her elephantine way, but I fear she is in love with me. If I can break her of the habit of smoking those nasty little perfumed cigarettes, I think I'll marry her. I'm not as young as I once was. It's time that I settled down.

Besides, her father owns quite a stretch of U. S. Rubber stock.

And my Elvida is an only child.



NIGHT

By Dayton Stoddard

NIGHT! When the wind sweeps over the desolate fields, playing mournful notes on the rain-soaked trees and reeds and the guttural w-h-h-oo of the owl frightens ghouls in the grave-yard, where white tombstones rise up like ghosts in the darkness.

Night! When the wind whips the black sea to inky mammoth waves, whose maw devours ships and men, and the wail of the siren cleaves through the black veil like the sob of a soul tortured in the fires of Hell.

Night!

I shudder.

My wife is warming her ice-cold feet on my back.



MEMENTO MORI

By Patrick Kearney

THE doctor in the insane asylum told me the man in Cell 987 had murdered his wife. I went over and asked him why he had done it. He told me this story:

The very first time I saw her (he said) I was uneasy and a little frightened in her presence.

There was something about her that held me away from her—something gruesome, horrible; I knew not what. Though I knew it was absurd of me, I could not help shuddering every time I kissed her.

For some reason that I could not understand at the time, she inspired me with the same feeling that comes over me when I smell flowers that are used at funerals.

When I looked at her I felt as though a cold blast from a vault had blown into my face.

And yet there was nothing in her appearance or in her temperament, as far as I could discover, to inspire this feel-

ing. She was always in the best of health; robust and full of life. She was constantly joyful. Of morbidity she had no trace.

We were married two years and in that time I had neither been able to rid myself of this morbid complex nor to discover the cause of its existence.

I was nearly maddened.

I lay awake at night trying to solve the problem.

What was this strange, uncanny, horrible thing about my wife that reminded me of death and the grave?

I tried to laugh at my fears, but they persisted. I tried to shake them off, but I could not.

And then one day I saw the reason. It came to me in a flash. Ah, it was horrible, horrible!

Her head—that head that I had loved and caressed—her glorious head—ah, God! *It was shaped exactly like a skull!*

So I killed her, of course.



IF you like the Present, it is here. If you dislike it, it is going. Could anything be more considerate?



IT is easy to be virtuous. When in doubt as to what course to pursue, simply choose the most disagreeable.



A SOCIAL climber is one who doesn't know that the only people worth impressing are too well-bred to be impressed.

A MOMENT OF MADNESS

By Helen Woljeska

SHE had been born in Vienna, and all the Viennese ardour of living sang in her veins. At the age of eight she had been brought to America; and, little child though she was, she quickly appreciated the social and personal freedom of her new home. To be allowed on the street without the attendance of maid or governess—what bliss! To go to public school and meet boys and girls of all social classes and shades of complexion—what fun!

The unwritten law, however, which in return for the liberties granted demands sobriety and self-restraint, was less to her taste. She was temperamentally unfit to become an American. However, all went well. She grew into womanhood and early became a wife and mother: Valerie von Waller had transformed herself into the Hon. Mrs. William Leonidas Van Suetendael.

The surprising thing is that she was happy. She enjoyed her social position. She loved her son passionately. She was fond and proud of her husband, a big, strong, good-looking man seventeen years her senior, who probably owed the record of his clean and decent life to an inherent lack of emotionalism rather than to any heroic initiative of his own. However, the fact remained that he was, in business as well as in private, a true and good man.

The year after their second child had been born—it was, to the father's unspeakable joy, a girl—the Hon. William had suggested a summer in Austria, as a thoughtful compliment to his wife. She, the babies, and coloured nurse, were to go in May, while he would join them in August, and take

the whole family back safely to Montclair a few weeks later. So it happened that, in early June, Vally with children and nurse was pleasantly settled at a fashionable hotel in one of the loveliest suburbs of Vienna.

One especially glorious summer day Mrs. Van Suetendael went to spend the afternoon with an old friend of her mother's in town. Dressed like a dream in lacy white with rose silk parasol, she drove away in a taxi, all smiles and expectation. It was a long and charming ride, along shady, hilly suburban streets, past coquettish summer homes and large gay hotels, until finally the city was reached, beautiful in the white and green of her buildings and foliage, under a blue and brilliant summer sky. When the taxi stopped at its destination Vally was surprised to find that she actually recognized the distinguished-looking apartment house which, a former palais, stood somewhat back from the street in a garden riotous with roses—just as she had last seen it, more than fifteen years ago.

The visit passed off very agreeably, and Mrs. Van Suetendael felt so much at home with her old friends that, when time came to leave, she allowed herself to be persuaded to send a phone message to Delia, and stay for dinner.

At eight o'clock she finally rose to go. Frau von Vivenot urged her to let herself be driven to the station, her carriage was at Vally's disposal; but Vally would not hear of it. She was not going by rail at all. First she would walk a bit and at the Ring she would take a taxi home. She delighted at the prospect of a stroll through Vienna's

lively streets in the seductive summer evening.

"Do at least allow me to send Babette with you!" urged the other.

Vally waived this proposition laughingly. "You must not forget that I am an American now. I do not need a maid eternally trotting on behind me!"

So, after many farewells, and being literally loaded down with roses, she finally stood in the street, alone.

It was half past eight o'clock—but in Austria the sun does not set as early as it does in Montclair. The sky was still light, of a transparent, greenish blue, deepening into gold towards the west; yet the street-lamps and shop windows were blazing with electric lights. The streets were alive with autos, chic carriages, officers, and well-dressed women. From the Austrian Alps a perfumed, invigorating breeze was blowing. And the distant sound of a band playing in some hotel garden diffused liquid music all through the air.

Vally felt radiantly alive. She was fully aware of the pretty picture she made in her white and delicate lace stuffs, with the huge bunch of roses, and none of the admiring looks that caressed her slender figure, smiling face, and shining hair were lost on her. Admiring looks were nothing unusual to her, even in Montclair. But how different their quality!

How different everything here, how subtle, intoxicating, the very summer air, the whole of life! Oh, to be back in Austria! To walk on her native soil once more! It was not walking, it was floating, flying. She was no longer the Hon. Wm. L. Van Suetendael's wife—she was the Vally von Waller she should have been, her whole past life blotted out, her head and heart filled only with laughter, music, joy, beauty, love of life . . .

Suddenly, confused, she came to a standstill. Had her big amber eyes actually answered so brightly, so encouragingly the challenge of those brown eyes over there. The young officer saluted. . . . Somehow,

Vally's fingers trembled, loosened their hold, and, right before him, all her roses fell to the ground—so many symbols of beauty and yielding. She stood deeply embarrassed.

Graf Rheidt, introducing himself with a courteous bow, gathered up the roses and returned them into her hands. Still somewhat tremulous, she thanked him. "A big load, to carry all the way home to Hitzing," she whispered, as their fingers touched.

"Is the *gnaedige Fräulein* also going to Hitzing?" asked the young man vividly. He stood close before her, still holding on to her roses, and in his slender brown face all his eagerness and joy at having met her was expressed.

"I am looking for a taxi now," said Vally weakly.

"So was I—just looking for a taxi to Hitzing—" he extemporized. His eyes fixed hers, questioningly . . . then he ventured: "Could you—would you—grant me the honour of escorting you back?"

It was precisely what she had wished him to say; and yet, now that he said it, her heart, fluttering, palpitating, cried "No;"—while her lips, softly, uttered a "Yes."

Only after she was established in the taxicab did she regain her mental equilibrium. The spirit of adventure surged high in her. Gaily and mischievously she replied to the young man's sentimentally ironical sallies. Through subtly veiled allusions they succeeded in acquainting each with the other's general conditions of life—it was exhilarating, like a mental masquerade, and Vally felt deliciously alive. "You know," she confided, "I adore Vienna! The life here seems like wine to me—like wine and roses! But sometimes—" she added tragically, "sometimes I wish I had never come back. It will make Montclair so drab in comparison."

"Montclair?" he questioned.

"Don't you know Montclair, N. J., you happy man?"

"Oh, in America," he said.

"Alas, yes, in America. Montclair, the most well-behaved town in the universe, where even the cats wear muzzles and stay home at nights. . . . Oh, let me forget it exists! Tell me about Vienna—its joys, its life, its love. . . . I was born in Vienna," she added proudly.

"And you left Vienna for Montclair?"

"Ah, not of my own free will! I was taken away, as a child. It was a crime, because this is where I belong. I never realized what I was missing, until I came back here and saw mine own people—saw them live the sunny life that I also had been made for! Here—here—" she pointed out of the window, where, in the gathering darkness of the summer night, lay villas dreaming in the embrace of their dark and perfumed gardens, "did you see that little white house with the portico—hidden in its garden like a card in a basket of roses? That's where I should live—where I want to live—and sing—and love—"

At sight of the Greek villa a film had passed over the glowing brown eyes. There was a silence.

"Love," he finally said, in his soft, drawling voice, "I fancy that love, to people like you and me, is the same will-o'-the-wisp in Vienna as in Timbaktu—"

She stared at him wide-eyed. "Love only a will-o'-the-wisp to you—in Vienna? I do not understand. It seems to me that all life here is a love-song, a brilliant affirmation that happiness is real!"

His eyes were centered upon her, and yet seemed to see far away. "Does not love, the minute you lay hands upon it, turn to ashes? There is delirium, a moment of madness, of course—that is real. But does it satisfy us beyond the brief space of its duration? I imagine we moderns think too much—and perhaps we ask too much—to ever be truly and wholly happy. We have the thirst of the eternal, the ultimate—it is the cause of all our misery . . . and all our

greatness. . . . The villa you just pointed out to me—I happen to know the woman who lives there—and I know—that she is not happy—" he turned his head towards the darkening window.

Vally threw herself back into the corner of her seat. Chilled, unhappy, humiliated, she closed her eyes tightly, unwilling to see anything any more. But her soul soared high above the smoothly travelling little cab, high up into the gloomy evening sky, from which the last trace of sunset glory had faded, and desolately it contemplated a bleak and hopeless world, where disillusion must follow every rapture, and death grins among the roses.

She was brought back to herself by a touch on her cheek, a warm, lingering caress, while a uniformed arm was passing itself behind her shoulders.

"Don't," she said wearily, "don't . . . you love that woman in the white villa. . . . I am nothing to you. . . ." The flash of a street lantern showed her face like an uncertain oval, with dark, tragic eyes, framed by the halo of golden hair and lace hat.

"Ah, but love is an illusion—" he whispered against her face, "you are the divine intoxication, which alone is real—" his arm pulled her upon his breast, and his mouth covered her mouth.

* * *

When the taxi with sudden halt stopped half a block from her hotel, Vally sat up with a deep sigh.

"When will I see you again?" he asked—the old, old stereotyped question, which yet, sometimes, means life or death.

She did not know. She wondered vaguely, bewildered. Then, with sudden impulse, she threw her arms about his neck and strained herself against his breast. "I love you—I love you—" she stammered, among kisses and tears.

"Darling—darling—to-morrow afternoon?—at this corner?—at four o'clock to-morrow afternoon?"

"Whatever you wish," she sobbed.

Finally she regained herself. "Good-

bye," she cried, "Good-bye!" And before he could help her, she had torn open the door, jumped from the cab, and disappeared in the darkness.

Like one in a dream, Vally walked back to her hotel, crossed the brilliantly illumined lobby, took the lift up to her rooms. A great grief swept down upon her, enveloped her like a mourning cloak. She felt horribly sobered. All was vain—she saw it clearly—the uselessness of all sin—the sterility of all virtue—happiness nowhere to be found! Everything vain! Nothing remains except the bitterness of regret! Had she perhaps come from a star where love is a more complete thing

than it can ever be in this world . . . ?

She found the babies asleep, and Delia eager to hear all about the happy visit. She waved her away. "Give me paper and pen," she said, "I must write at once."

She sat down, her face plaintively drawn. With flying pen she wrote:

"Am leaving Vienna to-morrow morning. Climate not agreeing with me. Coming home next boat."

And addressed it to the Hon. Wm. L. Suetendael, Montclair, N. J.

"Take this down to the office, Delia, it is a cable, and must go at once," she said.

Then she buried her face in the roses.



BEFORE AND AFTER TAKING

By Fannie Luxmore

SHE appeared as sane and sensible as any other old maid until the fall of the year 1916, when a most alarming change was observed in her demeanor. If she spied a man approaching along the street, she straightway crossed to yonder side. If, on the Sabbath day, a male unfortunate was ushered into the pew beside her, she hurriedly bustled into another. If milord accidentally encountered her in the privacy of her home, she immediately scurried about for a hiding place. Why?

On page thirty-five of the October number of *THE SMART SET* were the following words: "When a woman is no longer afraid of every strange man she sees, she is old."



THE SONG

By Muna Lee

THAT you might know how I loved you, I made a song all tinkling phrases and silvery words. That you might know how I loved you, I tore it to bits and laid my grief in silence under the grass.



PURITANS get such delightful pleasure from such simple vices!

THE IRRESISTIBLE MISS JEFFERSON

By Arundel Begbie

A lady told me, last week, that I was the only being she had ever heard say a good word of Winsome Jefferson, so probably I am the best fitted to tell her story, or part of it. The whole would fill many volumes and never know dullness. I have been intimate with her since her childhood, have understood her fascination without being maimed by it, and I know her family history. Any of these experiences by itself is somewhat of an education: the three together make a bewilderment, and, even as I prepare to open my narrative, I am sorely puzzled as to where I should commence, and where leave off. Her whole career has been a series of incidents (I was one of them myself) which, seemingly separate, were in reality closely connected with and interdependent on each other, so it is difficult to isolate any single one. If the tale halts at times, and at others becomes discursive, I apologize beforehand.

BEFORE her marriage, Winsome was one of the Goodhearts—a fact which will convey much to four counties and to London Society with a capital S. For the others, suffice it to say that the family had been notorious for many generations for certain racial peculiarities which no marriage had succeeded in modifying. They were invariably good-looking, essentially aristocratic in appearance, and—judged by accepted moral standards—as bad as they well could be.

The men, almost without exception, were spendthrifts, rakes, gamblers, profligates, drunkards, or wastrels; the women emulated the reputation of the men, but achieved notoriety for almost less tolerable misdemeanors, while every third generation a woman-child had appeared who caused even her own relatives to stand aghast. Winsome Goodheart insured the continuance of

the tradition for another three generations. The irony of their name was not likely to be overlooked by the wits, and for long years they had been spoken of, behind their backs, first as the Badhearts, then as the Bad Hats.

I remember Winsome since she was born, and I fell in love with her when she was seventeen. She was the most aristocratic-looking of all her brothers and sisters, but was adjudged by those who only perceive the obvious to be the least good-looking. She could have been that and still have been beautiful.

My affair with her taught me one thing for all time, and that was that apparent beauty is less enthralling than the latent kind, and it explained to me why the best-known beauties of the world have left me and others, cold. I write at an interval of more than a few years since I laid my worship at her dainty feet, and can see the whole thing in its true perspective, while my eyes are no longer bewitched by the glamour of those days.

Many of the so-called beauties of the world have been acquaintances of mine, and their steadfast charms have wearied me. They were consistently lovely in every petty detail, and I could have recognized any one of them a quarter of a mile off. I have sometimes failed to recognize Winsome when her eyes were only a hand's breadth from my own. She was never the same for any length of time. Within five minutes I have seen her the innocent child in Greuze's "Broken Pitcher" and the enticing devil of Romney's "Lady Hamilton as a Bacchante." She could assume such contradictory resemblances as these at will, and one stumbled on her beauty in such

sudden realizations with all the delight of the scientist who makes a wonderful discovery.

Of her heart, I knew nothing. She was recklessly generous—too generous in some matters.

For instance, she gave what she called her love to too many men at once, and she often told me that it was nonsense to believe that we could only love one at a time. She used to tell me this when her sway over my senses was most potent; that my adoration survived so severe an ordeal speaks eloquently of her power. I sank my pride and manhood sufficiently low to share her love with others, to tolerate a divided loyalty and to rejoice in kissing her wanton lips.

But I awoke, and, as I wrote above, escaped without being maimed. This was just before she married Hungerford Jefferson. I sent her a rather beautiful crucifix for a wedding-present; she was a Roman Catholic at that particular period and very religious; she said so herself.

When the divorce came three years afterwards, she had abuse showered on her, the more so that she wrecked the happiness of some dozen lives over it, but I never blamed her. She could no more have resisted what she called loving, and her desire to make men love her, than the tiger-cub can resist its nature and become a benevolent zoophile.

The divorce was the Rubicon of her career. After it, she left a track of ecstasy, misery, madness, and crime wherever she passed, and more than once summoned me to disentangle her from the meshes of the net she had woven for her own discomfort. She had little fascination or attraction for me once I had broken free from her spell, and never regained the least hold on either my head or heart though she tried at times. She interested me—that was all, and her loneliness with women-folk, who regarded her as an Ishmael, made me feel I must stick to her.

She was thirty when she astonished me by writing me orders to find a house

for her at Corchester, where I had my dwelling. She was adorable in homeopathic doses and at intervals, but, as a diet, no! So I wrote and pointed out that Corchester had all the intense dullness of the ultra and oppressive respectability always rampant in a cathedral-city; that she would be like an orchid in a turnip-field; that she would not have a soul to speak to; and suggested that Monte Carlo would be far more suitable.

She replied that she had changed completely since she had last met me, and had settled down into the humdrum respectability of middle-age. She averred that the atmosphere of a cathedral-city was precisely what she was longing for. "I have always been religious, as you know," she wrote, "and there will always be you to talk to, and the tradesmen. One has a right to the conversation of one's tradesmen."

I understood that custom had established the right to mine, but I did not want her at Corchester, where I was respected if not liked. I wrote several dissuasive letters which were of no avail for she had made up her mind, and life has taught me that when anyone—particularly a woman—of little mind makes that little "up," it requires almost superhuman power to make him or her change.

Sadly and with misgiving I set about finding her a house, and sought for one situated as far as possible from the dwellings of the most righteous, and with a garden the seclusion of which would baffle the penetrating eyes of the very holy. From what I knew of Winsome, I distrusted the garden.

This is where this particular adventure of Winsome's really begins. All that I have written is ancillary to what comes now, but it was necessary to account for, if it does not explain, what happened.

Winsome arrived at Corchester with the eyes of a *religieuse* about to enter her novitiate.

There was a picture of a girl—painted in the reign of Queen Victoria—called "The Soul's Awakening." It

was typical of the popular taste in art of that day—but this is not the place for art criticism—I only intended to say that Winsome had that look in her eyes; she also had purchased a beautifully bound prayer-book.

I met her at the station, by command, and escorted her to her house, which she found charming. She was always enthusiastic in her appreciation of anything done for her, and that was one of her charms.

"You'll be bored to tears here," I prophesied. "You don't know what religion means in England until you live in a cathedral city."

"You don't seem to understand, Pilgrim, that I am religious myself."

"Pilgrim" was a nickname she had bestowed on me for no earthly reason as far as I know.

As she said it, she turned on the soul's-awakening look, and I was amazed at the zealous ecstasy in her eyes. It made me think of the rack, the stake, and other pleasant religious formalities.

I put my arm, by the right of ancient understanding, round her waist—she still had the waist of a girl of sixteen—and said:

"Are you really, Lady Hamilton?"

Even as I gave her the title, the Victorian girl disappeared, to be replaced by the compelling fascination of George Romney's Bacchante. That was what was so wonderful about her—this utter contrast of change. You had but to see a sudden resemblance in her to someone or something else and to tell her of your perception, and she could always recall the resemblance at will afterwards.

She had been in her new surroundings nearly five weeks before the trouble I had foreseen began. I had avoided appearing in any public place with her most successfully, and had been spared awkward inquiries; but luck never lasts.

I had gone into the small shop of our most successful florist one morning, and there met a friend of mine—a Sir Peter Wombin, whose house lay

just outside the city. We got talking with the inconsideration for time typical of cathedral cities, when who should come in but Winsome, looking like a beautiful flower herself, and younger than ever.

I saw the look of amazed admiration on Sir Peter's face. I knew he was rejoicing at the prospect of an introduction, which I decided should not take place; and I knew that, though she showed no signs of having perceived his existence, she had labelled him as game and in season. She had come in to try and get a particular kind of flower, but she didn't know its name. She could describe it, and did so to the complete mystification of the florist and myself.

"I think you must mean—" and here my friend put in an appalling pseudo-classical word. "It's about so high, isn't it; and the buds always hang down before they open, and . . ." he went on with his description, she vaguely punctuating his sentences with a procession of "yeses."

"But how clever of you recognizing my description!" she said, with a look calculated to tempt a hermit. "Do you think they'd do well in my garden?" She had the most dangerous of all weapons—the innocence of a child.

"If I might see your garden, I might advise. May I?"

"Of course; but can you spare the time?"

"I am quite sure of that," he replied, and I groaned in spirit. I knew the symptoms, you see.

"I could motor you, if you'd let me have the pleasure," he added; and I determined to go, too.

"Good-bye, Pilgrim," she said with finality. "Come and see me this afternoon; come and have tea with me."

"I think I'll come and see the garden, too," I parried.

"Well, you'll have to walk—or run," said Sir Peter. "I've only got the two-seater with me."

Winsome laughed delightedly.

"Oh, you would look funny running!" she said.

I knew exactly what would happen, and many of the whispers which speedily flew round found their way to my ears. What would have been said had I not chosen so secluded a garden I tremble to think—I had spent many hours with Winsome in a garden myself.

Of course I expostulated with her, but she met my efforts first with the innocence of an irresponsible child, which almost made me feel that I was the guilty one in hinting at such dreadful things, and afterwards, with the cynical frankness of the free lance. She boasted that no woman could ever take a man from her against her will, and that, if Lady Wombin did not know how to hold her own husband, she was a fool and deserved to lose him.

It was hard on me, and I made use of every argument I could think of, but she had made up what she called her mind and was deaf to reason, or any other consideration.

I didn't attempt to warn Sir Peter, for I knew how futile such endeavors would prove. He was smitten with the madness Winsome knew so well how to instill in men, and only one thing existed in his world—that was Winsome.

I confess my cowardice: I ran away!

There threatened to be too much tragedy, and I wanted to be away from it, so I went to Scotland and left matters to settle themselves. I gave the affair six weeks as an outside limit of endurance, and every day scanned my paper, expecting to see the announcement of a forthcoming sensational divorce; but nothing happened.

The next part of the story is told from hearsay evidence, assisted by my imagination. Winsome gave me a great deal of it herself, and she told it so as to make me extend a sympathetic pity to her innocence and childishness. She came out of her accounts of the episode without blemish—the victim of circumstance and misfortune.

Sir Peter had very soon ceased to care what people thought, or said. His only wish was to be with Winsome, and the more openly he could be so the

more he rejoiced. His greatest pride was to flaunt his infatuation in the face of the scandalized world of Corchester. Poor Lady Wombin pleaded with him, and recalled to his memory the fact that he had herself and his children to consider, but she might as well have attempted to stem a river in flood with a piece of paper. Then she wrote to her brother, told him of the impending tragedy, and implored his help. He, himself a married man of rigid probity and extreme views as to the sanctity of the marriage-tie, came hotfoot on a visit to his sister. His efforts with his brother-in-law met with no success—indeed, that sinner told him plainly that the sooner the catastrophe came the better he would be pleased, as he was sick of the shams of life when the real was almost in his grasp. Lady Wombin's brother—a Colonel Morris, by the way—determined to interview the lady, and called with that intention.

At the end of half an hour—he did not hurry the interview, once he was in her presence—he was madly in love with her himself, and she was smiling encouragement at him from eyes which could shrivel a man's honor. It is not difficult to imagine the feelings between the brethren-in-law! It was when they were worked up to a frenzy which threatened to resolve into overt violence, that I returned from my holiday, and I was lucky enough to find Winsome alone.

I found her indignant—terribly indignant. There had been a scene the previous afternoon, and she had hated scenes always. I felt myself pitying her against my will and better sense. Colonel Morris had been spending the afternoon with her, and they had been sitting on the seat in the shrubbery.

"You know how stupid men are, Pilgrim?" I did, and said so. "Well, he would insist on taking me into his arms, and he's rather nice-looking, you know, and awfully strong, and then he began kissing me, and perhaps I kissed him, too. You see, I do like him, and it's absurd to say that you can't love two people at once, because you can."

I wondered whether this wonderful child of thirty, this breaker of men's hearts, would ever know what love means, as I listened to her.

"Then an awful thing happened! Peter came along the path right on us! I shall never forget his face, and he said such fearful things that I shivered all over. I think he was quite mad."

I understood; for it was finding Winsome in the arms of another man which had cured me of my own infatuation. I realized at the time that it was a case of kill or cure, and that some would have been killed where I obtained release. Apparently Sir Peter was not cured.

"He said awful things to me, and called me horrible names, Pilgrim," she proceeded, with tears very near her eyes as she recalled the scene, "and then the two men began to abuse each other, and Peter said that his arms were strong enough to hold me against the world as long as he had life, and he swore by all sorts of sacred things that if he caught his brother-in-law, or any other man, making love to me, he'd kill him. Then Colonel Morris told him two could play that game, and that if Peter required a hint that he was no longer wanted, he had certainly just had a good one. He told him that he'd better go before he was made to. Then Peter turned to me and asked: 'Don't you want me any longer, Winsome?' and I said, 'You know I do, Peter. I could not do without you now.' 'There you are, my dear brother-in-law,' sneered Peter triumphantly, but Colonel Morris turned to me and asked if that meant that I didn't want him, and he looked so sad and miserable that I had to say I wanted him, too, and I do, Pilgrim; I really love them both, but how it will all end I can't see."

I determined to take a hand in the game. There were poor Lady Wombin, her children, Morris, and his wife—all intimate friends of mine—and, apart from that, there was the natural desire to prevent a scandal—and a scandal in a cathedral city to boot.

Even as I kissed her on my departure—I had always kissed her since the old days and rejoiced on each occasion to find that the ceremony never stirred me in the least—my inspiration came to me. I would appeal to the Dean!

If there were one person in Corchester who was at all likely to overcome and frighten into good behaviour my errant Winsome, I felt it was the Dean. The Rev. Hildebrand Dash, D.D., was the planet around which all the ladies of Corchester revolved. He was good-looking, well-preserved, and had the self-assurance which years of dogmatizing without contradiction so often brings with it. The ladies of Corchester vied with one another to do him honour and he flourished on so full a diet, but his hold over them lay in the universality of his esteem. He held none more highly than another, and Mrs. Dean had never been in the smallest degree jealous of her husband. She knew him, and trusted him completely.

I went to the Dean and told him of the scandal so imminent in his cathedral city. He was shocked at first, but confidence in himself to unravel any tangle, to smooth any disturbance, came to his help, and he assured me that I need not worry.

"I have had far greater difficulties to deal with in my time, believe me," he said, and I disbelieved him.

He apparently had never seen Winsome and had heard little more of her. Perhaps the many adoring ladies of his congregation had conspired to keep her existence from being heard of, in the charmed circle of The Close. Be that as it may, I had to give him her address and many other particulars.

"The simplest solution would be her going. If only you could persuade her to go," I said wistfully, "it would settle the whole thing. Everything would come right then."

"Yes, I think you're right," said the Dean. "I shall persuade her to go."

"You may not find it very easy to do," I criticised.

"You think not?" he asked. "I am

quite sure I shall succeed. You may rely on my doing so."

"I wouldn't bet on it," I replied.

"You might do so safely," he retorted quite unruffled and with the same quiet self-assurance.

He proved right.

It was on a Sunday night, after supper in The Close, that I confided my tale to the Dean. On the following Sunday night he preached a magnificent sermon on the miracle of the Gadarene swine, and I saw Winsome listening to it rapt in admiration. She had asked me to take her to the evening service and I had done so, having tea with her first. She avoided all mention of the two desperate lovers, and was in a chastened mood. Her beautifully bound prayer-book was much to the fore as we walked to the cathedral, and her discourse almost terrible in its propriety. Propriety seemed so out of place in Winsome.

The next day there was consternation throughout Corchester for the Dean had disappeared as if by magic. I took the news to Winsome quite early in the afternoon, only to find her

out, but there was a note for me, the maid said.

There was. This was it:

My dearest Pilgrim,

How can I ever thank you for having brought the dear Dean into my life. He is the most wonderful lover I've ever had, and you yourself were rather nice, you know, Pilgrim. We are leaving for abroad—that's sufficient address for the present. Later on, I'll write and tell you our news and you must tell me yours. Will you give my love to both Peter and Colonel Morris? Tell them they are not to be foolish and quarrel about me. I love them both too well to wish for that. You remember I always said you could love more than one person. I must fly! I've got to pack, for Hildebrand is going to call for me in a hired car at day-light. My best love to you, Pilgrim.

Your loving Winsome.

"M'yes," I said as I refolded the letter and put it in its envelope, and then I wrote to the house-agents to let my house as soon as possible.



DELIVERANCE

By Marguerite Buller Allan

SHE lay with closed eyes and hands folded
Motionless, wax-like.

Until the last moment she had rejoiced in life
Knowing herself beloved by him.

But now as he looks at her, he thinks—

Happily their common life is ended:

Had she lived longer

She would have learned how impossible it was for him
To sustain a passion.

And he felt like an actor, overcome with nervous terror,
Who hears, with holy relief, the curtain rung down.



GOOD-BYE, GOOD LUCK, GOOD LORD!

By Lilith Benda

I

—So forgive me, my dukelet. Full of allure though the prospect seemed, I just can't become your consort. We've had a good six months' gambol, but boredom is setting in, and the thought of marriage repels. Let your dowager mamma and your dowager aunties set their minds at rest. The adventuress makes a timely escape, releases you from her talons with a little sigh of regret, and a big sigh of relief, with the "Good-bye, Good Luck, Good Lord!" which puts a finish to all transitory gallantries.

Affectionately,
Alma Carewe.

P. S.—Unless you very much wish them back, I'll keep the pearls and things.

Made public through the momentary impulse of an indignant dowager-duchess, the newspapers of London and New York gave prominence to the letter with which the heroine of three sensational incidents, all somewhat murky in their ethical significance, bade farewell to a scion of nobility on the eve of their wedding day.

The young duke's infatuation had been the chief topic of London gossip for some months. His engagement to Big Jim Carewe's daughter had aroused a howl of protest. But family horror, the counsel of friends, even the pleas of royalty had prevailed not a whit, when, only a few hours before the time set for an interchange of vows, the lady in question made her astounding *volte face*, thus capping two similar performances which had made her no-

torious in America as "The Girl in Gray," a jilt de luxe. The daughter of a swindling banker, whose wife had given up the ghost at the shock of his commitment to the prison, where he, too, subsequently died, Alma Carewe had become in turn the innamorata of two exemplary and affluent business men, both of whom had been eager to elevate her to wifehood, and both of whom she had rejected at the eleventh hour. Her letter to the duke won her a new epithet. "The Girl in Gray" became "The Good-bye, Good Luck, Good Lord Girl."

A storm of resentment greeted the Carewe when she returned to America some weeks after the disruption of the duke's romance. God-fearing, church-going citizens burst into abuse at the sound of her name. And in the face of their invectives Rupert Ramsay, master of homiletics, exponent of the all-puissance of humility, swayer alike of laboring class and exclusive coterie, the *enfant gaté* of the American populace, concluded one of his famous editorials with an injunction in her behalf.

"Her plight," it read, "is but the plight of all women of frailties, of all the piteous wastrels, who since time immemorial have flaunted the scarlet badge of shame, and whose sorrows have expunged their sins. Let the virtuous women of America come to the fore now! Let them show the world that sense of oneness which in this country of ours binds all into a great, democratic fraternity, while it admits of no differentiation between sinner and saint. Without any show of superiority or patronage, let them take into their hearts as an equal this outcast who has

returned to her native clime. For each time that she renounced the sacred rights of wifehood Alma Carewe but expressed a false sense of unworthiness which rankles the ostracized sisterhood, and all the loneliness, all the sorrow, and heartache, and self-disgust, and horror about to be swept from the world by the winds of brotherly love, she epitomized in her grief-stricken 'Good-bye, Good Luck, Good Lord!'"

No other person so conspicuously in the public eye would have dared jeopardize his prestige with any such pronouncement. But Rupert Ramsay was secure. For hod-carriers and magnates, charwomen and haut-mondaines, beggars, plutocrats, plebeians, grandees, prudes, debauchés, vestals and wantons, transgressors and benefactors of humanity, the very heretics who upbraided him—all commingled the cries that acclaimed Rupert Ramsay the most illustrious personage of the United States of America. Rupert Ramsay was the hero of his epoch; Rupert Ramsay's influence and authority were unparalleled; Rupert Ramsay's lionization amounted to deity worship. No campaign was ever undertaken without first currying the favor of *Ramsay's Weekly*. No enterprise succeeded unless stamped with the periodical's approbation.

His editorial in defence of the young woman wrought an immediate change of front in her favor. In a supreme manifestation of his disciples' subjection, even the most prudish among them became eager to effect this out-cast's readmission to the ranks of the undefiled. The editorial was more widely read and more loudly praised than any of his outputs since the far-famed recommendation of mercy he had written when the hands of the law were closing upon Big Jim Carewe. At that time Ramsay's behest alone had checked inflamed depositors from raiding the bank-offices, and had very nearly brought about the acquittal of the man, whose daughter now, sponsored by Rupert Ramsay, seemed on

the point of social rehabilitation.

Over tea-tables, ladies who had vituperated began to gush of Alma Carewe. Men's faces took on a sanctimonious solemnity when they discussed her. Pastors declaimed from their pulpits upon her misfortunes. So far-reaching, indeed, was the influence of *Ramsay's Weekly* that an enterprising writer of popular songs composed a ballad entitled "Good-bye, Good Luck, Good Lord!" which recounted, in slow waltz time, a maid's farewell to her lover, the chorus beginning

"A cry of 'All aboard!'
Good-bye, Good Luck, Good Lord!"

II

Ramsay's Weekly brought enlightenment to the masses, and emoluments of astonishing magnitude to its founder, editor, and owner, Rupert Ramsay—emoluments, moreover, of which he made no secret, citing them, indeed, as so many proofs of the infallibility of his belief that sound effort and clean principles procured ampler returns, material as well as ideal, than could the methods of corruption and chicane.

Ramsay's Weekly printed clean and wholesome stories, clean and wholesome poems, clean and wholesome essays, all fired with altruism, all saturated in optimism, and all faint reflections of the guiding spirit, whose hebdomadal editorials, signed with an unassuming "R. R.," had gained fame, fortune and fealty for their author. Rupert Ramsay's articles, each of a uniform brevity, hung framed on the walls of countless homes; Rupert Ramsay's doctrines were preached from pulpit and platform; Rupert Ramsay's adherents were legion.

When now and again a skeptical voice arose, it was only to be drowned among the panegyrics. And even the heretics marvelled at the dexterity wherewith this man made of an outworn phrase of neologism, at the astuteness he displayed in gathering jaded ideas, and, as if with a tremendous

flourish of an omniscient pen, giving them forth to the world as epochal revelations. Denuded of their dithyrambic ardor, Ramsay's articles became mere echoes of the cries that had filled a decade of upliftery. His were the usual exhortations to socialism, Christianity, brotherly love, universal suffrage, feminism, a single standard of morals, the welfare of the lowly, the co-operation of mankind, the extinction of graft, a national sense of justice, the downfall of militarism, the sanctity of the home, civic reform, democracy, patriotism, sex hygiene and soul sanitation. But in all of them, as against the diatribic acerbity of his precursors, there was infused a spirit of tolerance, a whimsical optimism, half saccharine, half pungent, which interpreted criminality in terms of mental sickness, which saw in the fallen lady only a misguided little girl, which refuted every argument with the proclamation that God was in his heaven, and all was right with the world, and promised a lifetime of whole-hearted content to all who listened and learned by investing ten cents every seven days in a copy of *Ramsay's Weekly*.

Through all of the eminent editor's writings there drifted, together with a cringing who-am-I-that-I-should-judge note, the undercurrent of Rupert Ramsay's sublime belief in Rupert Ramsay. "My readers," "my correspondents," "my theories," "my tenets," "my discoveries"—upon the I's and the my's, and the me's he seemed always to bestow a clinging caress, upon the persons he professed to revere as well as upon the evildoers he censured, a lofty pity. It was as if, were Rupert Ramsay in gracious condescension to soar to the domain of the God he adored, that Deity would dismount from his throne to be patted on the head by the hand of Rupert Ramsay.

A tall, broad-shouldered man of some fifty years, gaunt but sinewy, raw-boned and clean-shaven, with bushy eyebrows that met over a well-shaped nose, with sunken cheeks and temples, and a shock of iron-gray hair,

the swarthiness of his skin, the intensity of dark eyes always in deep shadow beneath heavy upper lids, gave to the renowned personage a compelling aspect. Fawningly he stooped. And yet, far more than an erect carriage would have suggested it, this decided stoop conveyed an impression of power behind the cringing, of the condescension wherewith an august being leaned toward its underlings. When he spoke the silky urbanities rolled out in a sonorous basso profundo. Rupert Ramsay in the flesh, indeed, was the very personification of Rupert Ramsay in print. He and his writings exhaled the same effect,—of a something massive, grandiose, bombastic, unctuous, sleek, benign.

Although the masculine element bent its knee before the idol in abject transport, Ramsay was pre-eminently a women's man. When from all sides his disciples importuned interviews, almost always a gracious note explained that the stress of vast projects precluded him from granting the wish. But there were many admitted into his sanctum, and among these the softer sex constituted an overwhelming majority. Women worshipped him. The social leaders of the staid Long Island colony, whose shining light he was, vied among themselves without much show of dignity for the mark of his approval upon their every action and word.

Nor was he lionized only by the worthies. There were week-end parties on country estates, typical gatherings composed of affluent bachelors and such ladies of a free-and-easy type as hover perpetually between gentility and a less rigid mode of existence, and so conduct themselves as to leave their true fibre perilously in doubt, amidst which the great man's presence was no rarity. Curiously enough, for all his rôle of reformer par excellence, both men and women liked him, and tendered him a deference closely akin to that which the masses displayed. No breath of gossip ever wafted tales to more squeamish circles. And in the atmosphere of coquetry and cocktails

he was absolutely at ease, never dropping from his attitude, intoning his stentorian speeches, walking always with his gracious stoop, smiling always his smile of brotherly love, bearing always upon his arm the fairest of the feminine flock.

Very often, upon such sojourns, when a long meal had been topped by an hour of dancing, and a lazy lassitude conduced to sentimental dissertations upon "the good old days," one or another of the assemblage would recall the wild revels of bygone days which they had enjoyed in Big Jim Carewe's bungalow, an establishment surreptitiously maintained on the Long Island coast, some fifteen miles from Rupert Ramsay's home . . .

III

It was six weeks after Alma Carewe's arrival in New York that a storm of excitement swept over the good ladies bent upon the castaway's rehabilitation. A little figure in a dove-gray riding-habit, hatless, her ashen blonde hair piled high, had been seen dashing over the country roads on a spirited roan. Gossip was rife. Inquiries were made. It transpired that in the financial ruin following upon his arrest which had swept away his property, Jim Carewe's Long Island bungalow had been overlooked. It passed to his daughter's hands. She was making it her refuge now. Fired with religious zeal, the ladies one and all set out for the bungalow, ready, according to Ramsay's adjurations, "without any show of superiority or patronage," to take the outcast into their hearts.

But the ladies returned to their homes aghast. Through the lips of an obdurate maid, Alma Carewe very flatly denied them her presence. And when, urged on by their idol, they tried again and again to see her, after a week of it, upon arriving at the entrance to the wooded, private roadway, they found the iron gate closed and bolted against them.

Straightaway they hid themselves to

the master's side for instructions. Giving the question his deepest consideration, staring before him as if into the infinite, he besought them to be patient. They received his words in silence. Into their eyes there came a look of awe. By the great man's face they could perceive that the incident was replete with import. For when a matter of vast consequence concerned him, Ramsay had a habit of twitching the left side of his face so that it quivered slightly, constantly while he mused.

It quivered when he counselled them to patience. It was an odd habit. It suggested a tongue in the cheek.

IV

A HEDGE so high as to conceal the idol's home from intrusive eyes, surrounded smooth lawns, whose sheen, tempered by the softer color notes of silver firs and birches, blent harmoniously with the grays and dark greens of a house half covered with ivy. Those privileged to enter for consultation with the doctor of souls left always impressed by the air of chaste, costly simplicity that pervaded the place.

Those privileged to enter were for the most part ladies who came, in limousines of impressive elegance, solely to lionize and adore. In the late afternoon of an Indian summer day, when from the steps of the porte-cochère Ramsay was bidding them farewell, three such privileged dames of girth and lineage found themselves privileged further to view a tableau fraught with significance which enacted itself before their eyes.

The ladies' eyes were fixed in ardent worship upon Ramsay's face. He stood with one hand upraised as if in a pontifical blessing, the other resting on the head of a huge mastiff. His basso profundo reverberated. He was stooping as always. A light wind lifted his rough shock of hair from his head, making him appear somewhat like an Old Testament prophet. He was dressed in a shabby, ill-fitting black suit, and upon his necktie there

gleamed a big cabochon emerald. There was an element of picturesque theatricality in his attitude. By not so much as the chirp of a bird did an alien sound break into his discourse. It was as if the very earth were hearkening in silent adulation to the speech of a celestial being, when of a sudden there broke out a clattering of hoofs, the great man's words died in the utterance, and the ladies gasped. Following his glance they recognized a little, hatless figure in gray, mounted on a high-spirited roan which was approaching them at a gallop.

Bringing her mount to a standstill so sharply that for an instant it reared and plunged, Alma Carewe, "The Girl in Gray," "The Good-bye, Good Luck, Good Lord Girl," leaned back in her saddle, and averted her head, as if waiting in haughty composure for the women to hasten their adieux and retire in her favor. For a long time Ramsay stood without moving a muscle, without saying a word, staring, merely, at the averted head. The eyes of the three women darted excitedly from the woman in gray to the man beside them. At last he lowered his upraised hand into a gesture of gentle dismissal. And the three, reluctant to leave though their slow steps proclaimed them, bowed an adoring acquiescence, and entered the limousine. When, a moment later, it was chugging its way out of the grounds, they looked pryingly over their shoulders at the two who remained stock still, like figures in a tableau vivant.

It was only after the automobile had disappeared behind the hedge that the woman bestowed a quick glance upon Ramsay, gave a filip to the reins, and walked her horse in leisurely fashion toward where he stood. When within a few feet of the verandah, "Some of your soul seraglio, eh?" she drawled.

She stood scarce above five feet, and despite her insouciance of manner, her littleness and fragility endowed her with the appealing helplessness which, linked with a patrician cast of countenance, enables some women success-

fully to play the most intriguing of rôles. By the length and attenuation of her hands and neck, by the delicate tracery of veins running along her cheeks, the high-arched insteps and eyebrows, the pure oval of her face, and the slightly aquiline little nose, she was invested with an aristocratic stamp. The whites of her eyes were a robin's egg blue, the irises a quiet gray, and through heavy, straight lashes she seemed to peer out at the world a little timidly, and pensively, and ruefully, and mischievously as if she were saying, "I have sinned and I'm sorry. But repentance is so becoming that I must ask you to let me sin just a little more."

"You *matinée* idol!" she whispered now, mounting to the lowest of the steps over which he towered. "You soap-box orator!" she went on at the next step, and when she reached the third, she smiled suddenly into Ramsay's solemn face. "You jitney messiah!"

He, too, smiled in response. And at the smile, she shrank a little away, taken aback at the teeth it displayed, and at the strange look, as of a world-redeemer and a rogue, which, without quite obliterating a substratum of kindly genuineness, fell over his features.

"A perfect and upright man," she murmured. "'One who feareth God and escheweth evil'—and has a way with women. So this is Rupert Ramsay!"

"So this is Alma Carewe!" came his urbane bellow, "a little later-day Magdalen, whom perhaps it's my mission to save."

"Who doesn't care to be saved," she put in quickly, "who couldn't endure being saved, really . . . Alma Carewe, who refuses to be branded a handmaiden of righteousness by such a pillar of righteousness as you! Alma Carewe for whom you're making a mess of things." A frown wrinkled her forehead. She tapped impatiently against the top step with her riding crop. "You with your 'God's in heaven,

all's right with the world' effusions, you've made everyone imagine themselves without sin, and then you make me a Magdalen, and enjoin all without sin among 'em to bury me in bouquets. I'd far rather have the scriptural stones."

His smile became even more expansive in its benignity. He offered her his arm, and when she slipped her white hand through it, led her with a majestic mien akin to that of the mastiff, which followed, into the doorway.

"That's why I came to talk with you to-day," she went on, as they entered the hall, "what d'you mean by influencing those lumpy dowagers to call on me, and patronize me with their presence? I don't want 'em to forgive me my sins. I wallow at ease among my sins. Fact is, I've a weakness for sins . . . Make them leave me in peace."

By this time they were on the point of entering the Ramsay sanctum, its walls lined with book-shelves and pictures, a desk littered with papers in a corner. She stopped in the doorway, and threw her little head far back.

"I don't want to be saved, you see. You can make them leave me alone. And won't you? . . . Won't you, please, hosanna man?"

Still the Ramsay countenance retained its baffling inscrutability. While there was a trace of keen appraisement in the lingering look that covered her from well-shaped head to slim foot, not by so much as the flicker of an eyelid did he betray anything more than parental interest. He bowed her to a chair, and seated himself at the desk.

"Little wastrel," he intoned sadly, "little street Arab—little pariah!"

"Servant of the people!" swiftly she retaliated, "Mountebank, mobocrat, sycophant, bondman! Household pet like your mastiff there—a mere slave to the hordes that bow before you. . . . For shame!"

When no disconcertion manifested itself on the swarthy face, immediately she subsided into her vague, helpless manner, clinched one hand and struck

the little fist petulantly against her open palm.

"Dog gone it, I can't seem to get a rise out of you, somehow. . . . Can't seem to penetrate beneath your silly old mask."

He rose from the desk and approached her. There was an element not altogether parental in the clasp of his huge hand as it closed over hers.

She lowered her eyes, and stood silent, half withdrew her hand, only to renew the clasp a moment later, intertwining, with a little gleam of daring in her eyes as she did it, her fingers with his.

"I like you, Rupert Ramsay," she drawled at length. "You're a pharisee, but an arch-pharisee and an arch-anything-at-all enthalls! Who but you could get away with father confessing a soul seraglio in a place like this? I almost believe you could get away with anything. . . ."

She leaned a little upon his arm with an effect of engaging dependence, her hand, of an almost simian length and attenuation, soft, flaccid, pallorous, with little cushiony palms and tapering fingers, almost hidden within his. Through the window they could see heavy clouds massing at the horizon, and obscuring the setting sun. Into the room there stole some of that atmosphere of mystery which at times settles over the world with the twilight.

Plaintively she went on: "The last time that I cried was only a few nights ago. Those awful women of yours had been pestering around all day. I was alone on the bungalow porch. There was a sickle moon, too, and I got sad because I wasn't in love. A shindy or something was going on at a house not far away, and the band was playing—nigger music, some kind of blues or other. You know how syncopated stuff sounds from a distance, don't you—all wailly, and haunting, and barbaric, and sad, and nice? Well, I began to cry, not because I hadn't a lover, but because I wasn't in love. So I went inside, and I read that

article of yours about me. Then I began to wonder what you were like. And finally, having nothing else to do, I thought it might be good fun to fall in love with you. . . . So I did—and here I am, hosanna man."

She spoke very simply, without a trace of guile in her voice or manner. No wariness crept into the face of the man who listened. An almost impalpable softening of his features manifested itself. Contemplating it, she moved uneasily toward the window, and then back to his side.

"I like being in love, don't you? Love's quite the nicest thing in the world—next to luxury. I want to have beautiful clothes and jewels, and everything as well as love, and, isn't it odd?—just when I've had them in my grasp three times now I've let them go. Jewels . . . you like them, too, don't you?" Lightly she touched the big emerald in his tie. "Pearls are the loveliest, and next to them the cabochons like this.

"Don't care for diamonds," she murmured on, "only the tiny twinkly ones for a background in settings, or the blue, pear-shaped ones that make wonderful pendants for strings of pearls. I'm so poor now!" she lamented prettily, "I've only a single strand of pearls left. Wouldn't it be nice if you fell in love with me, and gave me a pendant for my pearls, and that emerald set in a heavy platinum ring all massed with tiny diamonds?" Artlessly she laid her finger again on the jewel. "It would be nice."

There was nothing covetous in the way she seemed to fondle the stone. The proud little face made her words the mere plea of a child for a toy, or the tranquil demand of beauty for its birthright. A trenchant light shot into Ramsay's eyes. With great deliberation he raised an arm, and slipped it around her waist. But if his unwieldy eagerness implied an imminent loss of composure, immediately he made a deft retrieval.

With a prolonged "A-a-ah!" he lifted his head, intent upon an idea. "An inspiration! Alma, you're an inspira-

tion! This slender waist of yours—I could span three such. And what's a lovely woman's waist but a constant reminder that man's reach must exceed his grasp in order to maintain the eternal harmony of things?" His voice rose to a rapt chant. "I shall write upon that subject, substituting, of course, for the materialistic the spiritual; citing the soul of womankind rather than her inviting waist line; admonishing my rams to look to the ewes for guidance toward an ideal!" He smacked his lips. "It will be a gem! It will increase my flock! It"—as if to compensate her for the resumption of the pose, he smiled quickly—"it will bring me more advertisements. . . . Alma, I foresee a pleasant interim for a jaded soul like me. You're lawless and lovely. Getting acquainted with you may prove an exhilarating experience."

"Getting acquainted!" Her smile, which had died into pensiveness, broke out again. "My dear man, in a sentimental encounter a woman must never waste time getting acquainted before getting kissed; it takes the tang from the kisses. A kiss is the preliminary of acquaintanceship, and acquaintanceship more than a preliminary—a first stage, rather, of boredom—satiety, the good-bye, good luck, good Lord stuff . . . the little sigh of regret, the big sigh of relief! You're a man with a way with women. Surely you've learnt that. But as for kissing you!" On tiptoe she laid her hands on his shoulders, brought her face close to his, shook her head. "That smile of yours, that milk-and-honey manner—it intimidates, Rupert Ramsay. I'm afraid it would bespatter your most ardent embraces with a parental quality that would make things sort of—of incestuous, you know. Fancy acquiring a father and a suitor at the same time?" The arm about her waist tightened a little. "But, of course, one must give everything a trial."

She lifted her face. Very slowly the heavy lids drooping until his eyes met hers through a slit, he bent his

head to meet the pale, curled lips. But just when they were within an inch of his she started back with an indignant cry.

"My dear fellow, you look as if you were on the point of bestowing upon me some gift of the gods! I don't fancy any such high-souled generosity!" The frown riddled her forehead again, and she turned away, only to wheel upon him on the instant, half laughing, half angry, and to strike a little fist against her open palm. "Dog gone it! You're nothing but a smooth-tongued swayer of the masses. You're a brobdingnagian impostor of the most insidious species. This catering to the nobodies is a silly pastime. I'm afraid, father confessor, that the hobby you ride is a nag with defective hocks!"

At this the man stirred. His voice lost some of its oiliness.

"I ride no nag," he proclaimed, "I soar! If the hobby be lame—well, the matter concerns itself with wings, not hoofs. And Pegasus spavined remains Pegasus still! My mount cleaves the empyreal spaces, snorting"—abruptly the big voice became low and curt—"snorting the while in disdain at the damned silly rarefied atmosphere there."

"Ah!" The quick lift of her head bespoke a revived interest. "For all your obduracy I've had a glimpse behind that mask. And I believe that must suffice for the moment. It's getting late, and I've a long ride before me. We'll put off the—preliminary to acquaintanceship until some future time." She walked rapidly over to him with outstretched hand. "Good-bye for now. . . . Perhaps you'll come to see me?"

"Without a doubt."

"Soon?"

"Very soon."

"To-morrow?"

After a moment's rumination he shook his head. "My rams and ewes have ensnared me into a dinner engagement. But if the day after—"

"No, no," she protested, slipping an arm through his. "To-morrow, please,

you'll dine with me. . . . No?"

Again he pondered, and then with a flash of the wolfish teeth nodded.

"Good! And how'll you explain it to the flock?"

The huge hand upraised itself in its gesture of blessing.

"If a man have a hundred sheep," he quoted, "'and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountain, and seeketh that which is gone astray?'"

"Alleluia to that!" she cried, nestling beside him, "I think it will be good fun knowing you, Rupert Ramsay. . . . Can you find your way to the bungalow?"

Again the flash of teeth. "I've been there, Alma."

"Ah!" Her eyes narrowed. "So the world redeemer knew Big Jim Carewe sub rosa, did he? Participated in the clandestine revelries?"

The loftiness of his manner when he nodded brought even so questionable an association within the restrictions of integrity. They walked slowly to the door. And just as, when they entered she had paused to look up into his face, so she paused now, lifted her head, spoke in a tremulous undertone:

"Here we are, we two, and how'll it all end, I wonder? You the reformer, I the rake. You the staid, I the frivolous. But you a man with a way with women, and I a woman with a way with men. . . . How'll it all end, I wonder?"

Clumsily he took her uplifted chin in his big hand. "I wonder."

V

"So here we are, we two, with a month gone by! Here we are still, you and I, Rupert, just beginning to become acquainted."

Massive, unctuous, benign, as unscrutable as ever beneath that aura of rectitude which brought into compatibility with the proprieties even his presence in big Jim Carewe's bungalow, even the fact that Jim Carewe's daughter, against the satiny whiteness of

whose hand there gleamed the deep lights of an emerald, lifted her pale lips gently as she clung to him—massive, unctuous, benign as ever, Rupert Ramsay bent his head as if with humility to meet her lips, and stared steadfastly into the hazy depths of her half-closed eyes.

She flung from her a transparent gray scarf which completely enswathed her, laid it on the divan at her side, and leaned back in indolent languor. Her low-cut, sleeveless gown of gray tulle fashioned over silver tissue into long lines that accentuated her slenderness, contrasted with his shabby black. A pigeon blood ruby embellished his tie. And from the strand of pearls about her neck there hung a pear-shaped diamond.

"Unremitting devotion," she whispered, "shamelessly flaunted before the world for four long weeks, and as yet no satiety—a miracle! No shrieks of protest, either, from your rams and ewes—a greater miracle! Here we've had our—how shall I say?—our soirees uninterruptedly for a month, the long, pleasant evenings that end promptly at one o'clock when your automobile arrives to bear you to the realms of the strait-laced . . . and no shrieks of protest! Tell me, Rupert, how's the soul seraglio? Your odalisques of the spirit—aren't they getting restive at this association with a wench like me?"

"A bit troublesome, the ewes," he answered in a low, brusque voice at odds with the vociferant basso that electrified the flock, "but I've stilled their bleats."

"How?"

"With the aid of Robert Browning, poet of optimism, and one of the staffs on which I lean."

"*'God be thanked,'*" he quoted pompously, "*'the meanest of his creatures*

Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with

One to show a woman when he loves her?

"That got them, Alma. Not a one

of them but believes that she alone has viewed my hidden soul-side, that my absorption in you is but the absorption of a shepherd guiding a stray sheep back to the flock, and now even the most prudish of the matrons, the most virulent of the gossips beam upon this alliance with homage in their eyes."

He leaned away from her then, staring straight before him as if in profound reverie. After a moment she stretched out her hands in engaging entreaty. "Care for me much?"

"Excessively, Alma." He stirred from his meditations.

"And I for you. Fact is, I'm quite, quite mad about my alleluia lover."

In that fashion so prevalent among the unofficial abodes of American plutocrats as almost to be deepening from the straitness of a convention to the dignity of a tradition, the room they were seated in was furnished. Massive divans were upholstered in a crimson velvet which hung, draped and embroidered in gold, on the walls. There was the inevitable phonograph, the inevitable card-table, the inevitable pianola. Costly and conventional bronzes, nudes for the most part, stood about in company with the miniature pigs and elephants, the fantastically dressed dolls, and idols with rolling eyes that are employed as favors at the more spirited dinner parties. On the walls, among a few paintings, all conventional and costly, all portraits of women—the usual Henners, Astis and Cabanels—hung a pair of Parisian poster prints of a commonplace lewdness. The surface of a Louis Quatorze table was discolored in spots with circles, where wet wine glasses had been carelessly laid. And as if huddled away unassumingly, an old-fashioned roller-top desk stood in a corner.

To this desk at length she pointed. "There's the interesting part of this room. And more interesting even, as betokening the sub rosa side of this sub rosa establishment—this!" With a graceful spring she brought herself to

her knees, catching at the crimson hangings, to draw them apart, and disclosed on the bare wall a portrait, evidently the enlargement of a photograph, of an unattractive, querulous looking young woman in out-of-date bridal attire. "My mother, you see. . . . Jim Carewe a sentimentalist! And I happen to know that he didn't care particularly for her. She was rather dreadful, poor Mother. Bit of a relief to me when she died. . . . But the spell of the idea! Wife worship, the American bane! Here where he conducted his gallantries are his desk, and his spouse's portrait, as if to establish that if the mask torn from the exemplar's face disclosed a roué, another mask on the roué's face hid the commonplace, sentimental business man. . . . It's a bit depressing. I imagined Father at heart a less sugary being. And it worries me. For now that I've found in you the arch-hypocrite beneath the up-lifter, will there follow another and perhaps spirit-blighting revelation?"

He sprang from the divan, threw an arm aloft, launched into an oratorical outflow:

"The instant of *bien être*! The great moment of inspiration! Alma, the creative mood is upon me, and to that mood alone I'm a slave. The nation awaits an editorial, and here, with the arms of my stray sheep about me I'll concoct it for the flock—call it simply 'A Woman When He Loves Her,' base it upon what we've been discussing, Jim Carewe's hidden aspect, and how I stilled the women's bleats." Starting toward the desk, he stopped suddenly to sweep her to her feet in a rough embrace. "Come along, Alma!"

Uneasy, bewildered, with a touch of reluctance she let him lead her to the desk. A faint gasp escaped her when, having watched him roll up the top, and seat himself, he drew her to his knee, took some sheets of paper from his pocket, pulled out a fountain pen, and handed it to her. "I'll dictate, Alma. Take down what I say."

At first she refused with a shake of her head. But an imperious frown

made her yield, although, after she had unfolded the paper and already held the pen over it, when already he had cleared his throat to begin, her quivering laugh distracted him. "Oh, but this is thrillingly fantastic, Rupert! To dictate a homily on sanctified bliss to an unregenerate pariah who sits on your knee, to—"

"Come, come, take it down!" Impatiently he silenced her. "The title, 'A Woman When He Loves Her,' and then the quotation—

'God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures

Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,

One to show a woman when he loves her.'"

His eyes were lowered beneath the jutting, Jovian brow. One hand, clenched, beat softly against the desk while he watched her write. The other he still held in the air, but when she had recorded the poetry, he let it sink to her head in a movement like a blessing, which, in some impalpable fashion, transformed itself to a sleek caress as he stroked the silvery, blonde hair. "Can't quite decide"—his voice lowered, and took on its curt intensity—"whether I like your hair better in its regal coil, or let down—massed over your shoulders, down your back, almost to your knees. You're a lovely wood-nymph, Alma, with your hair down."

He caught her little chin in his hand. Against his swarthiness it gleamed startlingly white.

"White, they say, is the color of innocence," he pursued, "I wonder! . . . But to work, to work! Take down what I say." And on the instant, intoning his words with measured deliberation, grinding them out like a talking-machine, he resumed his sonorous vehemence.

VI

"THOSE women," he began, "whom men have loved the best were beautiful, each and all of them, and virtu-

ous as well. For a woman without virtue may be handsome, alluring, charming even—and yet she is not beautiful. She may inspire a weakling's passion. She may become a great man's pastime. But only if her soul be purified by the fires of suffering may she become worthy and capable of holding a man's destiny in the hollow of her hand. Delilahs of the French salons, Greek courtezans with their guile, and their smiles, and their wiles, Francescas da Riminis, Cleopatras, Isoldes—all fade into insignificance before the sight of a weary young face bending over a cradle, or the fine smile of a bowed matriarch who joys in her home, her husband, her children, and her children's children. Beauty of body reaches its consummation only when beauty of soul reflects itself in the purity of beautiful eyes. A divine poem, a glorious painting captivates us because intangibly it expresses the secret of a great man's soul. But one woman, fine, good and pure, is worth all the divine poems ever written, or the most glorious paintings ever painted—is worth all your fair ones of the salons, all your ravishing courtezans, all your Cleopatras and Francescas and Isoldes. Paragraph."

Upon Alma Carewe's face a smile quivered. Another gleamed in response when, for the barest fraction of a second, their glances met, before he proceeded:

"Be he no matter how staunch in purpose, no matter how upright of calibre, of no matter how unflinching an integrity, and well-balanced a sense of justice, no man is able dauntlessly to confront the ordeals of existence, resist the temptations, continue his pursuit of an ideal, unless there be a (capital L) Lady of his (capital D) Destiny at his side, to comfort and assuage, to urge him toward his goal, ward off despair, and receive into her heart's innermost fastnesses the dark secrets and transcendental mysteries of his immortal soul. . . . Alma, I've decided." He tore himself from the spell of thought generation long enough

again to run his fingers clumsily through her hair. "I like you better with your hair down. You're more enchanting as a nymph than as a princess."

At this she flung down the pen, and threw her arms about his neck. But immediately disengaging himself, he handed her the pen, and burst forth once more. "By that hunger for affection. . . . To work, to work! Take it down, my dear. . . . By that innate hunger for affection of every man worthy the name, by the thirst for beauty and devotion which—"

"Rot!" Again, with flashing eyes, she flung away the pen. "By the emptiness of this bombast, and the comfortable feel of your brawny old arms about me, dear; by the deadliness of the everlasting jejune, and the delights of a frivol in the foam of existence, I admonish you, have done with this, forget the rams and ewes, and let's occupy the time more profitably."

Without a comment, he returned the pen to her hand. "Thirst for beauty and devotion which engenders a sublime hankering to be worthy the possessorship of beauty and devotion; by all the tears of all the wives and mothers who have ever lived—and by their brave smiles; by the staunch, sturdy comradeship, the fine understanding, the priceless assistance rendered by the good woman to her mate since the world began—and by the mystic allure of her clinging arms and eager lips; by the reek of blood in the foam of existence, and the eternal fragrance of life's deeper phases; by the heartbreak ensuable to affairs of carnal appetite and the little arms of helpless innocents who follow in the train of strong, enduring married love, I admonish you, men of America! Lay open your souls to the women of your lives! Cherish them! Strive perpetually to merit the love they lay at your feet! . . . That will get them, Alma, for there you have it—the American ideal: Passion interpreted in terms of progeny, and wifehood veneered with sickly senti-

mentality. That will get them. Now for a peroration. . . .

"This is the land of opportunities and well-lived lives," he went on, "where the peerlessness of womankind is recognized more absolutely than in any other country of the world. Men of America, I admonish you further! Make good before the world, and you will command the admiration of mankind. Make good before the high court of your conscience, and you will command the respect of mankind. Make good before the woman you love, and you will command something vaster and sweeter than the adoration of mankind; you will command the adoration of a heart that beats only for you."

With a little flourish she finished writing. "Well said, oh, master of sublimated piffle! Now let me practise your preachments, and adore you for a while."

Like a child settling itself more comfortably on a grandfatherly knee, she leaned against his shoulder. In a trice the theatricality slipped from his attitude. "Now, Alma, I'm going to see you as a nymph." Slowly he withdrew the amber comb that crowned her head, while yet again his unwieldy fingers ran through her hair, as it fell in heavy, silken waves over her shoulders and almost to the floor.

Over his features now the look of kindness, dignity, melancholy, which all the ineptitude of his mimings never quite effaced, manifested itself so openly that the woman on his knee fell silent in the midst of a tremulous laugh, and into her eyes there stole a soft, misty light. It brightened, however, into a gleam almost of terror when she saw the color receding from his swarthy face, saw the lips tighten, and a mordant light leap into his eyes. There was a long silence.

At last he leaned over the desk, folded the papers there, and returned them to his pocket. "This claptrap, Alma," he asserted incisively, "is a significant thing. In extolling the joys of wedlock, it bids farewell to my odalisques of the spirit, as you call them. And 'Unless

she be purified by the fires of suffering,

I said, a woman of foibles may not become the woman of a man's life. That's to prepare the flock to accept you, to bring into concord with my tenets the step I've decided to take. Alma, you're lawless and lovely, and I've decided"—a piercing glance transfixed her into immobility when she attempted to shrink away, "I've decided that you must marry me."

VII

NOT with a sigh, nor a laugh, nor a gasp, nor a tremor did she meet his words. The little face became utterly blank. Her chin fell. Her arms hung limply at her sides. She seemed astounded into a stupor, with her eyes lowered apathetically upon the floor, and her cheeks livid. A profound stillness broken only by the lapping of the waves against the beach outside, and the sound of the autumn wind, fell over the two. Finally she sprang from his knee, sped across the room, and turned facing him, staring past him. After another long interim, in the veriest ghost of a drawl, she voiced her alarm:

"A pew in the local church . . . patroness of a dozen homes for wayward girls . . . perhaps a litter of little Ramsays— Good God!"

At this the man at the desk rose, approached her, took the shaking chin in his big, gnarled hand, with some of the victor's cool serenity in his manner, and more of the touching helplessness of the vanquished, and, too, so gently, with such tenderness, as to cause the misty, tranquil light to steal into her eyes, even as she laughed somewhat tauntingly.

"I'm afraid I'll have to jilt you, darling. Your proposition opens up too hideous a prospect. . . . Seriously, aren't you ashamed for having made it? Have you anything to say in extenuation?"

"Lots, Alma," he answered quietly, "but only in explanation. The proposal holds good, and you will accept it. There's a great deal you don't under-

stand, wear. And I'll show you—"

"What? The hidden aspect of your hidden aspect? That which lies behind the lovable hypocrite I know even as in Father's case. It frightens me. I really believe you want to give me a glimpse of some hidden soul-side or other. . . . And I don't believe I want to see it. I don't believe I want you to tell me. Some other time perhaps—but not here, not now. . . ."

A spirited gust of wind whistled over the house. The woman shivered in Ramsay's arms. Her eyes travelled from the questionable posters on the walls to her mother's portrait, and then to Ramsay's face. "Not here, not now, dear," she whispered.

"Here and now, Alma," he insisted. "Listen while I tell you—"

He was silenced, however, when with a lithe movement she disengaged herself. "Now if you like, then, Rupert, but not here, not in this hideous room!"

Her eyes darted in all directions as if in frenzied search for some means of escape. Another gust of wind sounded over the house. The placid murmur of the waves continued. Of a sudden she ran across the room, caught her gray scarf from the divan, and with an "Outside, dear!" disappeared into the hallway, he striding after her without his obsequious stoop, his head held high, in his attitude more of the victor's cool serenity than the chagrin of impending defeat.

VIII

OVER the gravel path her light footsteps made no sound. The murmur of the waves, merged agreeably with a cricket's chirping, and the rustling of willow boughs above them, served but to intensify a stillness unbroken save for the crunching beneath his every ponderous stride, and the swish of her silvery draperies.

Suddenly Alma halted, a few yards separating the two, and faced Ramsay. Perhaps the magic of the scene, and of her misty presence, a mere lustrous

shaft bereft of substance, swaying as if half determined yet to escape him, tore the man from the self-confidence his face had shown when he followed her into the garden. Perhaps an irresistible impulse moved him to justify himself before the tribunal of wind and sea, and before this wispen waif who had fled from his arms. At any rate, when he set out into a speech replete with first personal pronouns, the flat, uncommunicatory tones rose upon the I's, not with his usual oily caress, but into a ring of defiance, of self-vindication that belied the something uneasy and pathetic lurking beneath it.

"I'm an exponent, Alma, of the principles of hearty laughter. I satirize the spirit of my age, and of my country. I conduct my fooling on the most gigantic of scales. I'm a first master of irony. I pat the universe on the head so gently that it swallows my gibes, I've brought tongue-in-the-cheek tartufferie to its consummate apotheosization!"

"Alleluia!" she mocked.

He made three steps in her direction then, the first sure, the second wavering, the third almost a stumble—and stopped, irresolutely. Like a child ill at ease in the dark, he brushed his big hand across his eyes, lifted it to his brow, peered from under it into the bewildering impenetrability before him. In a gradual drooping, like a movement of pain, or of shame, his huge frame lost its erectness. A listless shuffle succeeded his stride. It seemed to betoken the disruption of something more momentous than a love affair. Slowly he started back toward the house, when all at once, through a rift in the clouds, the moon appeared, pouring its white splendor over the world. He stopped short, and he lifted his head.

"Now I'll tell you, Alma! Now I'll explain!" His voice, loud, penetrant, incisive, swept over the garden like the voice of an immaterial being prey to a necessity conclusively to express a conviction, a certitude, which made it immune to the languor-provoking spell of

the moon. "Chewing-gum!" he cried out a second later, the vulgar word endowed with a certain augustness by his voice of an immaterial being.

"Chewing-gum!" he repeated. "Chewing-gum standards, chewing-gum ideals—there's the essence of the thing. A chewing-gum philosophy mine. . . . Let me explain."

"Puritanism is in the last stage of its wane." The unseen presence launched into its certitude. "The acid precepts of the pilgrim fathers proved themselves long ago too rigorous to follow. America grew tired of swallowing bitter pills, sugar-coated them for a while, and then, acquiring an insatiable appetite for sweets, took the sugar-coatings without the pills until it loaded itself into a state of indigestion for which I alone had a cure. For I hand them out a masticatory pleasing to the taste, sweet and sticky as they want it, which may be champed for a while, and—ejected. In other words, there are gluey traditions, jejune ideals dear to the heart of the American even as they are opposed to his actual scheme of existence. These I serve up in my editorials, but in such a way that they become congruous to a covert espousal of contradictory ideas. I hedge. I guard against too onerous an integrity by the use of counterbalancing statements. I compromise. I flavor my masticatory with tolerance and optimism. I tell them not to judge that they be not judged, but in such a way that their own failings fill them with no alarm, in such a way that they become grandly patronizing toward the very things which before my story moved them to childish invective. . . . Chewing-gum, you see."

Scarce had he spoken the last word, when he loomed up into the brightness, and stopped short. Alma pushed back a strand of hair which had blown across her face, made one or two hesitant steps toward him. But while from his eyes there flashed a fervor he remained fascinated by his conviction. Again he wheeled abruptly. Again he strode off into the darkness.

"The mob," he went on with ardor,

"loves to gush over an intangible deity. The mob, though it doesn't realize it, loves to quail before an iron-handed despot. Above all else, the mob loves to be fooled. To avoid it absolutely one must command both the things which are Cæsar's, and the things which are God's. One must command its gushing and its quailing—and one must play the trickster always. . . . Well, I fool the mob. I yell 'Thy will be done' so loudly that it doesn't hear the very I-am-I obbligate which makes it cringe the more servilely. And there's a keen delight in knowing that nobody has gauged the mob temper as adroitly as I, that nobody rules with as iron a hand, and laughs more loudly at the things he professes to revere, and at the things he professes to despise, and at everything—and at everyone . . . and at himself—than I! Then, too—" In a trice, without any apparent cause, but with something like a horrible wrench, the big voice became a sibilant whisper. "Then, too, there is something else. There is—there is . . . is . . ."

The whisper died away. His lips moved, twisted themselves into a grimace, but no further word came. He seemed struck into silence by the magnitude of the revelation he was about to make, and his eyes, wild and feverish, began to roll from one direction to another. The woman watching him retreated further into the flower-bed, uttered a faint cry of fright which he appeared not to hear.

Finally the lips composed themselves. His voice broke out again, not as a sibilant whisper, not with it penetrant incisiveness, but in a sort of broken mumble, with traces in it of his oily bellow which became, as he went on, more and more pronounced.

"There's the—er, the overwhelming satisfaction of knowing you're making the world a better place, that—how shall I say?—that by generating a tolerance toward what formerly it reviled you're—er—rehab—rehabilitating a nation, bringing about a new and less murky era."

He raised his hand in his gesture of

blessing. He stood as if he were sermonizing a multitude. And the woman among the flowers watched.

"There's the captivation," he bellowed on, "of a—do I make myself clear?—of a life-work. The—how shall I express it?—the instinct of the shepherd to tend his sheep asserts itself. By a— a sense of proprietorship you grow fond of your herd of cattle, your flock of sheep, even as you despise them. You want to enlighten them, to keep on reforming them, to—to—well, to keep on reforming and enlightening. . . ." In its entirety the pose re-established itself now; in its painfully blundersome entirety the certitude expressed itself; in his actuality Rupert Ramsay stood revealed. "You try to help; that's all there is to do. . . . You keep on trying—you keep on and on. . . .

"You try to help; that's all there is to do." So, after an oratorical preamble, after a long, impassioned discourse—so, simply, the certitude expressed itself. And Rupert Ramsay stood revealed in the actuality of his pose. The reformer, for all his varied aspects, remained at heart the reformer. Oily hypocrite, honey-tongued swayer of the masses, shrewd, unscrupulous business man, satirist, sophist, sensualist, despot—at heart he remained simply the reformer, a fanatic inspired to an impossible task by his very scorn of it, bound irrevocably to the hordes he swayed at will held captive by a jaded idea.

"And now do you see, Alma, what all this leads to? We—you and I, dear—we're going to play a tremendous joke on the flock. And without their knowing it, we're going to enlighten 'em, to help them toward the right track. We'll compromise with them in a way. You're lawless and lovely, and they're going to accept you as one of the worthies I expatiated on in the editorial you took down tonight. Do you see? It must be. I must have it so, because it will fit in so faultlessly with my projects"—he caught clumsily at her hand—"and because you're so—well, so exquisitely lawless and lovely, dear."

IX

SHE peered up at him through the heavy lashes, blinked uncertainly, looked away. She appeared desperately to oscillate, and at last threw up her white arms as if in absolute abandon . . . only to let them fall immediately, and to strike her little fist against an open palm, as she shrank away among the flowers.

"Doggone it, I just can't, dear." The nymph waved off her captor's arms.

"But you must. I've explained. . . . Can't you see? I must have it so."

Like a person faintly astonished at the density of his fellow-creatures, and yet serene in his self-confidence, he approached her. In spite of his cringe, in spite of his cheek's convulsive twitching, there was a mastery about the man before which she quailed. As she had held them out an hour before, in the hours when he first made his proposition, she held out her hands now.

Still he towered triumphantly. Still she quailed. And yet, as minute followed minute, slowly, impalpably, she who quailed began to triumph when, before the appeal of her frailty, and helplessness and grief-stricken eyes, his assurance fell from him. Gradually his lips parted in silly amazement. Bewildered, defeated, he started to slink away from her.

Then, and then only, the nymph decided between escape and her captor's arms. With the way laid open to her, the instinct to flee died out. The sight of his overthrow proved more effectual than had his masterful air. Ramsay was skulking away, with hanging head. And she who had eluded him, who had resisted the spell of his eloquence, the mastery of his presence, the pathos of his trite certitude, yielded as she watched his silly retreat, held out her arms, and when he went on as if unseeing, ran to him, lifted her lips.

"I will, Rupert. Of course I will if you wish it so much, dear."

On the instant his victorious manner

returned. The great arms swept her to him. Within their embrace she hung, limp, passive, her knees giving under her, the white face turned translucent by the moonlight, and thrown back so far that her long hair met the tips of the grass blades.

"I will," she repeated, the drawl supplanted by a new note, a choking, melodious, sob-like quality. "I will not, after all, because of anything you said, not because it will be a joke on the flock, or because it will help 'em—but just because I'm so crazily fond of my hosanna man."

A little cloud that was sweeping the sky dimmed the moon for a moment. In the wind the effect of a strain of music was wafted over the garden. From instant to instant, while the two clung in silence, this suggestion of music became more pronounced.

"Do you hear, Rupert?" she murmured. "Do you remember, I told you that I was listening to music the wind blew over to the bungalow on the night I fell in love with you—here, alone . . . before I met you? There must be some kind of a party going on not far away. And didn't it seem as if we were millions of miles from anybody?"

"Listen, now." . . .
More distinct with each instant came the strain. All at once she uttered a sound like a cry of terror and struggled from Ramsay's arms.

"Ah, Rupert, an omen! They're playing the 'Good-bye, Good Luck, Good Lord' waltz!"

X

WHILE they stood without a word the waltz strain died out of the air as gradually as it had come. But, as if it had heralded the swing of an inexorable pendulum, the spell which had overpowered them seemed broken for these two. Fanatic fervor disappeared from his eyes; in hers, the misty gleam dulled. They looked at each other dazed, confounded, like beings who had been brought down to earth.

Alma appeared readily to adjust her-

self to this new phase. She stretched out her bare arms in lazy relaxation, blinked drowsily, and sighed again—a sigh in whose note of relief there lurked but a slight undercurrent of regret. Tranquillity restored, smiling, she turned to him. But the perplexed frown riddled her forehead presently. For on his face was the bewildered astonishment of a wounded animal or a frightened child, of a being utterly at sea. He seemed stunned by this anticlimax which had broken the spell, stunned by the awakening thud of realities, by his powerlessness to ignore the fiat of a doggerel ditty, stunned most of all by a dumbfounding sense of liberation. He whose generalship swung the sentiments of a nation appeared bereft of his faculties by this swing of an inexorable pendulum. . . . Alma hurried to him, the look of pity and subjugation flooding her face, and with a touch of maternal solicitude, laid a hand on his arm. She began to speak hurriedly, soothingly.

"Come to think of it, Rupert, matrimony presents an inviting vista. There'll be the charm I've always had a failing for, the charm of the incongruous, the bizarre. It will be good fun to be Mrs. Rupert Ramsay, née Carewe, 'The Girl in Gray,' 'The Good-bye, Good Luck, Good Lord Girl.' . . . I suppose we'll give a most awfully exclusive reception soon after the ceremony. I suppose I'll have a day at home each week."

While she strove to cheer him, the vague, troubled look deepening on his face seemed to reflect itself on hers. Her smile lost its spontaneity. She went on a little brokenly: "I—I suppose I'll be sent to the big federations of women's clubs. And I'll have to take some sort of—of stand on the suffrage question. Or maybe I can go in for domesticity and simple frocks, only that—well—almost implies the little Ramsays, doesn't it? At any rate, it will be a good joke on the rams and ewes. It will be very fascinating. It—" She stopped abruptly, looked up at him with startled eyes, and when finally she

spoke, it was in a stifled, lifeless way. "It will be ghastly, of course."

Minute after minute went by, and still they stood without a word. His face expressed a hopeless struggle to arrive at some reason, some ultimate conclusion, expressed beyond everything else, mere infantile bewilderment.

Alma's eyes, in the meantime, had never left his face. Sympathy and submissiveness still lingered in their hazy depths, but by degrees her hands had clenched, her lips tightened, her drooping little form become rigid. She seemed to await a word from him, and when the resumption of his scrutiny bespoke a deadlock of befuddled thoughts and disparate emotions, at last very gently, very quietly, "I don't want to be Mrs. Ramsay," she said.

At this his head began to nod jerkily, began to wag, rather, like the head of a toy shattered, by a pivot to its body, which some unseen presence happened to put into motion.

"I don't want you to," he mumbled. Then raising his head, "Why?" he shouted angrily. "Why don't I want you to, Alma?"

The question in itself answered itself. Its furious entreaty betrayed the captivation he was striving to throw off, and yet terribly loath to renounce. This man who by the sheer force of his fustian swayed a nation's standards, found himself befuddled simply through a reluctance to accept his own decision. Alma could not be made to fit in with his projects.

She shook her head.

"Why? Why anything? No reason at all, I suppose. What put a finish to it all so suddenly? Nothing. . . . A stupid song."

"Perhaps"—his head wagged, and he smiled foolishly. "Perhaps it's that I'm getting old and disgusted with things."

"Not old enough to do the Darby and Joan with me, dear."

She slipped her arms about his neck, nestling at his shoulder. The quiet melancholy of her voice seemed to soothe him. Some of his bewilderment merged into the condescension of

Rupert Ramsay's far-famed attitude.

"So this, too, is over," she murmured after a pause. "The intolerable sadness of it—and the unspeakable relief! Why the relief? What pleasant prospects are ahead for either of us? You'll go back to your effusions and your soul seraglio, and I—well, probably to one or two more of the folk who run so tiresomely true to form. And yet—the unspeakable relief! . . . Isn't it odd?"

He continued to stare at the glittering pathway that stretched over the sea. "You try to create a little cosmos of your own—and it turns out a trivial hodge-podge. Pathos and bathos."

Her eyes, following his, fixed themselves upon the immeasurably distant spot where the water blent with the sky. "So this, too, is over with. Another episode finished. . . . Do you remember, Rupert, on that first day, how the clouds were outlined with a jagged streak of light like a lightning flash made static in the sky? And how I said it seemed to symbolize a passing love affair dulled into a more enduring association? It almost came to that, didn't it? But we escaped in time."

"We escaped in time," he echoed, almost in a whisper.

"I'm sick of symbols, and emblems and things," she drawled on. "I'm going to move on to-morrow from this stupid bungalow. The hankering to drift is upon me. I'm curious to discover who the next will be that's going to run tediously true to form."

Very slowly his eyes, so deeply shadowed by the jutting brow, settled themselves upon her.

"So it finishes," he said quietly.

"Finishes" . . . she breathed.

XI

INTO the silence presently there stole an alien sound, a faint, distant whir, growing each second louder and more distinct, settling into the sound of an approaching automobile. Alma uttered a cry of dismay. "Your machine, Rupert! It must be one o'clock. The soirée is over . . . and I don't want to

be left alone yet." She clung frantically to his arm. "Our last soirée—over! And I can't bear to have you leave me for the last time."

As if unconscious of her agitation, "So it finishes," he repeated.

Upon her face now there fell a look of cool, patrician apathy.

"If you don't mind, Rupert," she drawled dispassionately, "I think I'll say good-bye here. I'd rather not bid you farewell forever in the face of that Parisian poster, and the portrait of Mother in bridal attire. It—" The even tones broke into a dry sob. She clenched her hands, bit her lips, spoke finally in a barely audible voice, "I love you very much. Now go." And courteously she held out her hand.

He seemed not to see it. She held it out a little further, stepped closer to him, and at last he grasped it, let one big hand close over it, while in the other he took her quivering chin. Then, when she attempted to release herself, he swept her to him, caught her in a brutally vehement embrace, held her so for a long time until the sound of her sobbing aroused him, and she lifted a face astream with tears. Then he clasped her less impetuously, but more tenderly. The muscles of his left cheek began to twitch again.

"The—the last time but one that I cried," she whispered between sobs, "was when they made me leave a poor, fleasy pup on the doorstep. And the last time was just before I met you, when I got lonely and wanted to be in love. And now—now I'm crying because I'm going to be lonely. And I feel as if I were leaving a wastrel on the doorstep, or as if I were the wastrel left on the doorstep, or—or something. I'm getting all mixed up. . . . I'm all wrong. Everything's all wrong."

His cheek quivered more convulsively. In a desperate attempt to free himself from the spell of "the lawless and lovely," the attributes of his pose, the stoop, the cringe, the bellow, the strange smile, the sweeping gestures, all exaggerated themselves into burlesque. "I—must be going," he thundered.

She nodded. "And—a—ah," he continued to intone, "to drift for a second to material considerations, there will reach you, of course—"

"Yes, yes, of course," she broke in, "and make it a thumping good settlement, dear, for I'm going broke." Her hand touched his cheek, slipped to his tie, tapped the ruby there. "Don't forget," she added between sobs, "a pinky ring, in a filigree setting—ah, Rupert!"—hysterical laughter shook her—"I'm running true to form, too."

Scarce had she finished speaking when she topped the words with a dull "Good-bye, good luck." Save for her sobbing, her lips moved without a sound then, unable to pronounce the phrase that hovered there. "Good-bye, my alleluia lover," she cried out instead, in a strangling voice. It fell to a melodious whisper when she added, "Good-bye, darling."

"Good Lord!" In an abysmal croak the phrase she had avoided escaped him. It voiced a self-disgust, a sadness, a relief, a returned control, and, especially, the veriest bewilderment. It sounded like a knell,—of something, perhaps of a magnificent self-assurance which had endowed with a measure of grandeur the antics of a buffoon, perhaps of a restless, inner hankering for "the lawless and lovely."

On the day of their meeting he had plucked a crimson rose for a boutonnière. Now with great precision, with great deliberation, he untangled a bruised blossom caught in her hair, looked at it confusedly for a while, crumpled it in his thick fingers, let it fall, petal by petal, to the ground. . . . And then he strode away.

She stood there, alone, the tears rolling, unheeded, down her cheeks. The noisy chugging began. The bright light behind the pine copse wavered, and grew dimmer by degrees. Then very distinctly, "The unspeakable relief!" she commented, "But then, the intolerable sadness!"

The chugging became a whirl, grew fainter and fainter, ended at last with the faraway sound of a horn.

THE MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS

By G. W. Hamilton

SHE knew perfectly well he was interested in her from the first moment of their meeting. Married women are quicker to notice such attentions than their unwed sisters. She had wondered in the beginning why he had not tried to flirt with her as most men do when they meet women as pretty as she knew herself to be. It was a relief to find a presentable man who did not instantly assume that she was created to make his happiness complete.

She had often said to her husband, George Leonard, that he would never have introduced her to any nice man if he did not want to be relieved of the task of taking her to the Opera or play. She had said this without resentment, because she and her husband had married for love and were still fond of one another. George was one of those men who early outgrow any tendency to late hours.

At New Haven, where he was a football idol, he had tasted the sweets of popularity. And each year when he went to the annual game with Harvard he was fêted by his class and returned to New York declaring that he would have no more late nights until the next game. All of which was undoubtedly right from hygienic views, but likely to be dull to a young woman who liked dances and was satisfied with fewer hours of sleep than her husband.

They had been making an excursion to the National Park at Mount Rainier when they met Hubert Allen. A party of the guests at the National Inn had determined to see the sun rise from as near to Columbia Crest as the women could go comfortably. The prospect

appalled George. He was thoroughly tired. Sleep dragged at his eyelids. The mighty muscles that had gained him renown in his days of arduous training were flabby now and did not welcome hard physical activity. As he was not quick enough to play tennis and had a contempt for golf, that came of a lack of comprehension of its nature, he had settled into a life that had in it only business and sleep.

He was far too fond of his wife to disappoint her when he saw how she had set her mind on the excursion.

"You shall go, Honey," he said smiling, "even if your poor old George has to drag his weary length along, but I believe it would be better for me to sleep if I can find a man to look after you."

Later he captured a man and brought him to her. Hubert Allen had been at New Haven with George; but lacking any skill at major sports had not been of those circles in which heroes disport themselves. Leonard had never spoken to him until they met at the National Inn. Allen was amazed at his cordiality.

"Say, old man," he said amiably, "I'm tired to death and have a blister as big as a silver dollar on my heel and these early morning stunts don't appeal to me. As you are going, do you mind looking after my wife every now and then and seeing she doesn't fall down a crevasse?"

Allen's assent was not markedly gracious. To have foisted upon him a woman who would probably be plain and tedious would wholly rob him of the joy the venture promised him.

"Fine," George cried when he found

his wife would not need his care. "Joyce loves sunrises and sunsets and storms at sea and little things like that."

"We shall be kindred spirits," Allen said a trifle acidly. He had met heavy-weight lady travellers before who exuded poetry and superlatives; the National Parks seem especially attractive to such.

Before he met Joyce, Allen had thought of George Leonard as a successful man and therefore a shrewd one. But when the tedious companion he feared proved to be one of the most lovely women he had met he set George down as a fool to allow a stranger the opportunity for the intimacies such an excursion afforded.

Few men had made closer studies of woman than Hubert Allen, yet even he was compelled to admit that Leonard was justified in his belief in his wife's discretion.

The sunrise trip was not an hour old when he decided that the old tricks which could be used with success in most cases were useless here. She was as lithe and quick as he and as independent of his aid as a boy would have been. With perfect adroitness she parried his first abortive attempts to tell her how beautiful she was and how he had been looking for such an one as she since the dawn of time.

He decided instantly to become a friend of the family.

They rode together along the Paradise trail and among the firs of Van Trump Park and Indian Henry's Hunting Ground and he maintained a respectful attitude, which was just what she had longed to find in a man friend.

"Why did you never bring him to the house before?" she asked her husband.

"Always thought him rather a sissy," George replied. "All he did was read Swinburne and fence. We used to say he took up the rapier so as to meet enraged Continental husbands on equal terms."

"Is he that sort of man?" she asked. Allen was curiously uncommunicative about his past. Most men were more

than willing to boast about their fortune with women to her, a piece of indiscretion usually chosen by the very young or the very old, but Allen would never tell her anything.

"More or less," George said tolerantly. "He was in the diplomatic service a few years—Petrograd or Vienna, I forget which—and they say he fell in love with a woman and had to get out. Might not have been anything in it, though."

"Your mother lunched with me today," she said, he thought irrelevantly.

"And what had the dear old gossip to say?" he asked.

"She wants you to take things easier at the office and retire before long. She says you can afford it."

"What's put that in her head?" George said in surprise.

Joyce looked at him and smiled. "Wicked rumor mainly. According to your mother, I'm being talked about as a neglected wife solacing herself with her husband's friends and particularly with Hubert."

"What nonsense," he laughed. "Good old Hubert, I don't know what I should do without him. He likes Wagner's music dramas and you do, too. Talk about sleeping draughts, Joyce, I couldn't on a bet keep awake through those things. It's not a pose with me or him. He was that kind at New Haven. He always ran to Swinburne and Wagner."

"And rapiers," she reminded him.

"That was largely a pose I expect. Hubert's all right, but he wouldn't do as a business man."

"I wish you'd retire, dear," she said earnestly. "I married you because I loved you and how much do I see of you now? You come home and eat your dinner and then with a paper on your knees you nod till it's time to go to bed. And then you snore till it's time for breakfast!"

"It's my business," he said, "I work as hard as ten men."

"And that's why I want you to give it up and make me your business."

"I'm only thirty-six," he answered.

"Time enough to think about that when I'm fifty."

"I shall be forty-five then," she reminded him. "It may be too late then."

"For what?" he demanded.

"For wanting you to make me your business."

He did not answer for a moment. She was not quite herself. This might arise from a forgotten anniversary. She was always vexed if he forgot their wedding day or her birthday or some such occasion of sentiment.

"Have I forgotten anything?" he demanded.

"Only me," she told him.

He laughed at her foolish notion.

"That's the last thing I'm likely to overlook, Honey. I'm working for you. I'm seeing to it that there isn't a thing you want that you can't have."

She seemed unexpectedly obstinate.

"Your mother says there isn't any need for you to work so hard. She says your father left everything in such shape that the business runs itself."

"That was well enough in his day," he returned, "but I'm doing things on a far bigger scale than ever Dad did."

"I'm not such an expensive wife as most women in our position," she reminded him. "You need not go slaving on my account."

"I wouldn't know what to do if I gave it up," he said a little irritably.

"Ah," she said, "that's what I wanted you to admit. It is for your own sake you go down there and not mine. You have no occupation left you if you give up your office. In future, dear George, don't say you are toiling for me. We have ten times more than we need. There are no children to think about. You are neglecting me."

He put his arm about her to have it, almost for the first time, pushed away. He was not skilled in women's emotions and the thought that he must have forgotten an anniversary recurred to him. To-morrow he would remember and buy something more than usually valuable to make up.

"It's that mad music that's worrying

you," he said at length. "I always feel upset after those love and death scenes when I have to endure them."

"No, dear, it isn't," she said quietly.

"What has been worrying me for a long time is that you should be content to turn me over to Hubert. If you were an old, old man—"

He showed his white, strong teeth in a laugh. "Old, old men never make that mistake, and don't think I don't use my eyes. What's Hubert been doing? Trying to kiss your hand up on the roof among the flowers?"

"He has been almost as dull as you are," she retorted. "So far."

"He's the nicest and tamest thing to have in captivity," her husband declared, "and if ever he got gay I could break him in half."

"He might choose a rapier," she said quietly.

George yawned. "It's terribly late. I've a conference at the office at half past nine and you need your beauty sleep."

While her husband slumbered peacefully she thought over what her mother-in-law had told her at luncheon. Mrs. Leonard had declared that she should not always be seen with Hubert Allen but should choose a number of men. The two women had not raised their voices as they would have done had they belonged to a lower stratum of society but they left angry the one with the other. Mrs. Leonard said the gossips were busy. Joyce declared it was George Leonard's fault. The mother-in-law shrugged her shoulders and said she had known George since he was a baby and that he had an honest and affectionate nature.

She had found herself thinking a good deal about Hubert the past few weeks.

She had always been conscious that he observed her closely from the very beginning of their acquaintance. But whether it was an impersonal curiosity or one denoting a deeper regard she did not know. Of late it had seemed to her that in their appreciation of the highest type of music they had dis-

covered a close intimacy. It was so perfect an understanding that it troubled her. She knew, for instance, that when in a symphony or sonata a movement attracted her strongly that it was arousing a similar sentiment in him. It was an intimacy that should be shared with George, she felt, if only his were a nature susceptible to such high awakening. High above the noises that make up the strange voice of the night there came his curious muffled snore with the strange uneven intervals she could recognize so well.

She was now thirty-one and George had said that when she was forty-five he might retire. George in retirement would be a conspicuously unhappy object. With the need of going to his office removed he would own allegiance only to slumber and the pleasures of the table. The noise of his snoring so disturbed her that she shut the door that closed his room from her own.

II

ONE morning of early summer she rose early enough to take breakfast with him.

"Why do you so rarely come up to the roof garden?" she asked.

On the top of their pretty house on Riverside Drive—a residence fortunately remote, so far, from having lofty apartment houses for neighbors—there was a delightful roof garden, glass-enclosed in bad weather and a place of delightful coolness in summer evenings.

"I'm so tired when I get home," he explained, "that I like to read the paper and go to bed as soon as I can. I'm not for late hours any more. If I get up there there may be a dozen people and, you say, snoozing in a chair is bad form with visitors about."

"Come up to-night," she urged, "Hubert is certain to be there but nobody else so far as I know. You're so unsociable that I feel I haven't a husband any more. You shall have the most comfortable chair in the world and I will mix you cooling drinks."

"Sounds fine," he admitted, kissing

her good-bye, "but I'm working harder than ever at the office so as to be able to please you and retire. Dad left a collection of old fossils down there that hinder rather than help and as I can't let 'em go they get me on edge. My being tired isn't an excuse, it's a fact."

Several times a week Hubert Allen came in after dinner and went to the roof garden. He had, of late, dined with them rarely, although he was constantly invited. He had come to find George Leonard developing into a rather tedious kind of bore. It distressed him to find so splendid a creature as Joyce chained by matrimony and convention to so gross and uncomprehending a man as her husband.

After dinner Joyce made an effort to induce him to abandon his easy chair and paper and ascend to the garden. He was making a pretense of noting down the main points of a business conference that had taken up his afternoon.

"You will come, won't you?" she pleaded.

"Sure," he answered cheerfully—he was invariably cheery—"count on me."

III

HUBERT watched her pull out a very big, cushion-laden chair from the shade of some palms and place a smoking table at its side.

"Who is this specially honored guest?" he demanded. "Never have such cushions been offered me. Who is it?"

"My lord and master," she returned.

He frowned. "I hate to hear you use such a phrase as that!"

"Mustn't I speak the truth?"

He looked at her with that curious intensity of his.

"I wish you would speak the truth. I wish I might."

"George will enjoy your rare confidence," she laughed. She did not know why she was nervous this evening. During the last few meetings with Hubert she had been conscious of a lack

of the ease she had formerly felt in his company. "I asked him to be certain to come up."

"George will certainly never have my confidence," he retorted. "And why, pray, do you beg him to come up? Has he anything new to tell us of his engrossing business?"

"Are you fair to him?" she asked.

"I'd rather be fair to you?" he answered.

She reached for the telephone. "George," she called, "do come up. There's a most seductive moon and Hubert feels blue through dwelling on his past." She put the instrument down. "He will be up in five minutes."

He shook his head. "What faith! Why do you want him?"

"I am tired of you, perhaps," she laughed.

"You called him because you were afraid. You said to yourself, 'I'm in danger.'"

What he said was so uncannily true that for the moment she could not answer.

"Joyce," he repeated, "you're afraid."

"Afraid?" she cried. "Of what? Of you?"

"Not of me. You could send me away if you wanted to and I could not remain if a servant stood at the door to let me out. You're afraid of yourself and that's the most dangerous thing there is."

"Aren't you talking rather absurdly?" she said as steadily as she could.

"George might think so," he asserted, "but you won't. Joyce, I know you pretty well. I've given up two whole years to studying you and I've studied George, too, with the idea of knowing you better."

"He will be flattered," she said assuming an air of sprightliness she did not feel.

"He won't know," the man answered, "and if he did he would not understand."

"That's not a very pleasant way to speak about your friend," she told him.

"He was never a friend of mine," Allen returned, "in the old days. My

first recollection of him was as the instigator of a curiously unpleasant hazing experience of which I was the chosen victim. The next time he spoke to me was at Mount Rainier when he needed someone to take his place. Since then I have saved him many hours of a sleep that was more precious than your company. You may say I have taken his hospitality and drunk his wine and smoked his cigars. Well, he has dined with me, too."

She looked at him distressed, "I thought you liked him."

"I do, in a sense," he said quietly. "As we men go he isn't a bad sort. He has honesty and good nature and if his soul cleaves to the earth it is his lookout—and yours—not mine. You know everything moves in circles. George moves in so small a one that he comes back to where he started every few months. His ideas on art, religion and woman, for instance. I've heard it all so often that I know his very phrases for any occurrence that may arise. If you crossed the Drive here and the river and walked on and on in a straight line you'd come back again here after a time. The inner life is like that, too. George would encircle his world almost before you or I had started. How long have you been married?"

"Ten years," she said, almost unwillingly.

"Then you know it better than I. You are still ascending. You have not reached your zenith."

Joyce strove to get back to their plane of other evenings and to banish this unusual mood on his part.

"And you? Are you climbing, too?"

He smiled at her and nodded his head.

"Mine is a big world. I'm climbing, too."

"You've had companions in your journeying?" She tried to talk brightly and gaily so as to let him understand that while his conversation interested her it was not so intimate as he would have it be.

"Yes," he admitted. "But all of them

have dropped by the wayside. Our gears were different. You can't climb mountains or worlds if you have to lag behind for a slower comrade. Joyce, you know that as well as I do. I could climb if I had you with me."

"But you haven't," she said, and was glad the dim light did not let him see she was flushing, "and I do not think George would care to hear you suggest such an adventure."

He took a seat near her and looked into her face. "Sweet lady, he would not even know what we meant. He has been far too successful in business to have much intelligence left. When he comes up I shall tell him. Joyce, you know he won't come up."

"Of course he will," she answered. "He is busier than an idler like you can understand. Have you any idea how vast a business his is?"

"It runs itself," he answered. "I've been in. He looks after some of my property. I would trust a man like George with anything, even a wife if I had one."

"That's what he's done with you," she said steadily.

He shook his head. "Not a bit of it. George was always conceited. Those big brainless masses of brawn are invariably. Because he had his own way with men when he was a Yale idol he thinks his life must be a triumphal progress. He thinks, for example, that you worship him so adoringly that he can do as he pleases."

"Why shouldn't I worship him?" she said with a show of indignation.

"Because you are not an early-Victorian type of middle-class womanhood. You're delicately fashioned, Joyce, and you think for yourself and you've grown restless of late and perhaps you wish you were climbing mountains instead of being hand in hand with a plainsman. I'll never believe you worship him now. There might have been a time when you did but not now. You see I know you both rather too well to be deceived."

She did not answer him. She took up the telephone instead.

"George, dear," she called, "we both want you to come up and cheer us. We are boring each other dreadfully and Hubert is talking nonsense." She replaced the instrument on its table and turned to the man. "I'm disappointed in you."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose you are, but George is going to disappoint you more. Do you really think he is going to bother to climb those stairs? He's scanted of breath than when you tumbled into the arms of—don't they call 'em gridiron heroes?"

"Are you trying to make me miserable?" she asked.

"What's the use in trying to misunderstand me?" he answered. "Have you learned so little of me in these two years? Your husband had the luck to marry the only woman of all women whom I desire. He's losing her because he has so small a vision. Dear, you must know I love you and if you are honest with yourself you must know that happiness lies in coming with me and not in staying with him. You have given him ten years of your life. Have you no years to give me?"

She did not answer him. Instead she walked to the roof's edge and looked over to the twinkling lights of Jersey, lights that look mystic and faraway at night and very different from their environment of the day.

"Joyce," he said quietly, "you must have known it. Was there nothing to tell you? If you had been a different kind of woman I might have tried other methods. A thousand times when we have danced together I have wanted to crush you in my arms and kiss those sweet eyes of yours and tell you I held all the world in my two arms. I knew you to be made of too fine stuff for that. I wanted you to realize some time that I was the man with whom you could taste all happiness, the warmth of passion and the hours of quiet and peace that make up life. Say something, Joyce, this silence frightens me."

"You'll miss this view," she answered.

"Why?" he asked, coming to her side.

"Because I shall not ask you here again. What you have said to me you had no right to say. If you call I shall not receive you."

She wondered how he would take this dismissal. If it meant as much to him as to her would he be able to keep from his face the agony of spirit she was enduring and hiding from him? When she was more mistress of herself she turned to him and saw that he was regarding her with the whimsical smile she knew so well. He was an even tempered man rarely moved to violent expressions of emotion and tonight he had not departed from his customary air of reserve, although she sensed beneath what he had said an unknown depth of feeling.

"I have no mind to climb up the side of the world alone," he said, "and I want no other companion than you, my dear. Sooner or later you'll have to come with me, and you are the only woman for whom I can wait." His tone changed to a lighter bantering one. "Poor old George, you are making it very hard for him. I was so useful to him."

"If you have any thought for me or yourself you will contrive to find business that takes you away from us both."

"If it helps you I will," he returned, "but why this thought for myself?"

"I think he'd kill you if he knew."

He laughed gently. "What melodrama, Joyce! How unmodern of you! Your George is not in shape for murder. He is soft and flabby and weighs sixty pounds more than he should, whereas I'm always in shape. You have both of you laughed at my fidel-

ity to the foils, but such faithfulness has its rewards. When we were at Yale he could have broken me in half—those were the days of heroes, remember—but such times have gone by. Don't be frightened, Joyce. I shall bid him farewell almost kindly. Perhaps if we wait long enough he will come up."

She did not answer him but walked to the little flight of stairs that ascended from the landing below to the roof garden. Down another flight they went until they came to the comfortable room George called his library. It was distinguished even in that luxuriously appointed house for the comfort of its great chairs.

In one of these George was sleeping, his hands folded across a body already shapeless and gross. For greater ease he had unloosed the collar about his massive neck. Never had she seen him look so unattractive, so different from the splendid man she had married. She could have cried with humiliation of it as her eyes met those of Hubert Allen.

"George," she called from the doorway, "George, wake up! Hubert is going."

The sleeping man changed his position a little but his eyes remained sealed.

She tried to avoid Hubert's face but could not. He looked at the recumbent man with distaste and then at her slim upright body.

"Your mountain climber!" he whispered with an inflexion of sarcasm that made her wince.

She said no word in reply.

Instead she turned on her heel and ascended to the roof garden, and Hubert Allen followed her unrebuked.



MORE marriages have been broken up by husbands breakfasting with their wives than by husbands supping with chorus girls.



THE PANTHEISTS

By Douglas Turney

"AND to us has come the greatest gift of the Universe—our love."

They sat on the beach at La Jolla, the poetic male pantheist offering verbal libations to Nature, and the girl who inspired him pretending to count the aurated sands.

Vagabond breezes played about their uncovered heads; their fingers lingered, intertwined, and impelled now and then toward closer contact, and their senses keen for every detail of romance, yet not forgetful of the Great Nature which made their own particular miracle possible.

Satisfied for the time with their digital communion, they watched the white sails wander here and there across the water; peered at the Coronado islands, distorted by the miraging atmosphere into huge grotesqueries of air and ocean; wondered at the riddle of the seagulls which wheeled about the yellow cliffs.

"I love you," he said, leaning nearer. "Nature has been good to create this love, especially for us, and in such a wonderful place. Earth and sea and sky and all that is within them calls to us—tells us that Nature is love and that through our love we have a share in the Universe. Ours is a part in the eternal coexistence of God and Nature. What can we do, dear heart, to show

our appreciation of what has been vouchsafed to us? How can we give back to Nature something of our worshipping souls?"

She bent her head in thought, her white brow, because of her perplexity, wrinkling in what he considered a most bewitching manner, while she placed a rosy forefinger against her temple.

(He could have kissed her and he would have kissed her, had he not just then been thrilled with the goodness of Nature in giving him her love, and filled with a devout marvel at the beauties of the Universe in which her heart had been set for him, as by some celestial jeweler.)

"Think, darling," he urged, lovingly, gently, "see if from your delicate brain, more attuned to the sidereal symphony than my coarser, masculine one, you cannot bring forth a suggestion worthy of our love and of the glories in which we found it.

"Consider the beauties of the white-tipped, blue-troughed waves; the inconstant, yet grateful winds; the ocean, bluer here than any other place; the sky, more azure; the ochre cliffs; the carefree gulls; the sun-drenched air; the—"

"Oh, I have it!" she cried ecstatically. "I have it! Let's go into the hotel and play 'Chopsticks' on the piano!"



THE TIMBER KING

By Hugh Kahler

MRS. WARRENER'S footsteps sounded a diminuendo in the hall; a door opened and closed. There was a sudden silence between the man and the woman who were left together, the silence of constraint, of mutual question. The man opened his lips as if to speak, but either repented of his purpose or found no words to suit the situation.

It was the woman who finally ended the tension by speech.

She laughed softly.

"You seem surprised, Howard." Her voice was low, musical, with the round, resonant quality rare in the speech of singers.

Howard Warrener did not respond to her smile.

"I am more than that," he said slowly, gravely. "I confess that I was stunned to find you and—*and* Amy together—and apparently on the best of terms." There was something like reproach in his tone and his glance, but Maude Parrish chose to ignore it.

"We're excellent friends," she said. "I'm curiously fond of her—considering—" a flush darkened her cheeks. She did not finish the phrase.

"Friends?" Warrener challenged the word. "How is friendship possible between you two? Amy I can understand. She doesn't dream that you and I—that we—she doesn't dream the truth. But you—you *know*—how *can* you, Maude? It—it isn't like you to accept her friendship, with that knowledge—it's—it's in bad taste. I—I don't like it."

Maude Parrish lifted her chin perceptibly.

"If you mean that I'm not fit—" she

began, levelly, her tone suddenly hard, cold.

He flushed in turn, lifting a hand to check the words.

"You know better than that, Maude. I'm no narrow-minded Pharisee, to subscribe to the empty conventions of a hypocritical social system. There's not an ounce of that in me. There's no question of fitness or unfitness. I love you. There's no woman on earth who wouldn't be honored by your friendship—in my estimate. But—"

"But—?" She challenged his hesitation instantly. "Go on—let me hear your exact reasons for objecting to Amy's liking me and my liking her. I'm interested to discover your attitude. You profess to love me and to—to *respect* me—"

"You know that I do—both," he cut in soberly. "You know that this furtive, secret affair of ours was your idea—not mine. You know that I wanted to be frank with Amy, to lay the situation honestly before her and ask her to be generous and set me free. You know that I held back from the compromise makeshift of—an intrigue until you overpowered me. You can't help knowing that above all women I honor you and respect you—just as I love you beyond all others. But—"

"Another *but*?" Her face softened under his earnest speech, but the word revived her challenge. "Finish your sentence, please."

"It seems unworthy to take Amy's friendship under false pretenses," he said. "It's like cheating at a game. You know that if she understood the situation she'd hate you, despise you—*unjustly*, of course, but she'd do it, nev-

ertheless. Yet, hiding the facts from her, you let her make a friend of you—invite you here—trusting you—admiring you—”

“Why not?” Her tone was frankly hostile, now. “Her friendship is not founded on my—my appearance of virtue, but on qualities I really possess—on my face, my manner, my voice, my mind—*myself*. I’m actually the person she thinks me. I’m accepting nothing under false pretenses. Of course, if you object to my spending a weekend under your respectable roof-tree—”

“Don’t—please.” The man’s face contracted in a swift expression of suffering. “You know that it maddens me to be near you—that all I ask of life is to spend the years that are left of it with you. I’m sorry I spoke of it. I suppose I’m wrong to feel that it’s—it’s unworthy of us. Forgive me.”

Her face cleared magically.

“That’s more like you,” she said softly. “Now you’re showing me the man I know—the man I—I love!”

He took her gently into his arms, touching her cheek with his lips, a kiss the more passionate for its absence of passion. He felt her quiver at the caress. The discord of the situation seemed suddenly trivial, remote. He was annoyed at himself for having yielded to petty proprieties in the face of such a love.

Amy, small, alert, eager, curiously suggestive of a humming-bird in her lightening-like movements, her brief fluttering intervals of quiescence, rejoined them. It was obvious that she had conceived for Maude one of her impetuous friendships, that, for the time at least, Maude typified in her estimate all that was femininely desirable. And the spectacle of his wife, fluttering about this woman as though she were some honey-sweet blossom, vaguely repelled his instincts.

He had long since ceased to assure himself that he cared for Amy.

He was intensely weary of her activity, her utter want of repose, her frivolous, tireless skippings and hop-

pings. He was sick to death of the life she led him—of frantic motion, of chattering, trivial speech, of fads and foibles changing like the prismatic fragments of a kaleidoscope. He knew, too, that he bored Amy, that she found his normal calm irritating, tiresome, dull, that she had long since given up her illusions about him. And yet, as he silently watched her dance attendance on Maude Parrish, he could not conquer an impression of shame, of humiliation at his own part in the deception.

“Isn’t she simply *adorable*?” gushed Amy, turning to him after some mild flash of humor from Maude. He forced a smile to his lips. It was a feeble effort. Maude Parrish noted it.

“Mr. Warrener doesn’t share your enthusiasm, Amy—don’t make him perjure himself.”

Warrener flushed at the unfairness of it.

“I’m between two fires,” he said defensively. “No man is good at paying compliments in public.”

Both women eyed him for an instant. Then Amy laughed merrily. “Isn’t he deliciously stiff, Maude? I always think Howard ought to be in a book—he’s too droll for words.”

“He’s right about compliments,” said Maude slowly. “They need solitude. Perhaps he’ll improve on acquaintance.”

Warrener laughed uneasily. This sort of persiflage jarred him, set his teeth on edge. Here was no farce, but a serious drama, if not a tragedy. The comedy note was out of place. He lapsed into silence as Amy chattered endlessly on, assisted at intervals by a word or two from Maude.

The situation seemed increasingly impossible; this could not go on.

If necessary he would end it by inventing some excuse for his absence.

He dressed for dinner in a mood of growing discontent. His lips were sealed by every tenet of his code of honor. So long as Maude enjoined secrecy upon him he must support her masque of innocence, not merely by

tacit corroboration but, if necessary, by active perjury. She had trusted him; he could not enlighten Amy without proving false to her faith in his chivalry; he must continue to hide the truth, as seditiously as if for his own interest, must lend himself to a deception which every instinct in him condemned as ignoble, contemptible. He would get away—that was the one possible solution. To stay here, with Maude furiously in love with him, with Amy serenely unconscious of the ugly truth, was unthinkable. It would be easy enough to fake an excuse for running into New York after dinner.

But this solution was denied him.

Before he had ventured to announce his intention, while they were still at the table, the telephone summoned Amy. She returned with a tragic countenance to announce that her sister had been taken ill suddenly and was asking for her. Beth lived a mile or so along the shore. Amy had already promised to come to her instantly. There was the usual turmoil of confusion which Amy loved to create on any pretext, servants scuttling about, contradictory orders issued and cancelled and issued again.

Before he could collect his scattered faculties the motor had thudded away with Amy shrilling disjointed farewells from the window of the limousine, and he was left to entertain the guest.

"Destiny plays our game, you see!" Maude shrugged her shoulders eloquently as she took a cigarette from the bronze casket on the centre-table and skilfully applied the match he struck for her to its tip. "We can't escape—if we wanted to."

He surveyed her silently. She was maddeningly beautiful. A blind, unreasoning impulse flamed in him, an impulse to brush aside his hesitations, his scruples, to take life as he found it. But he choked it back.

Deliberately he kept the table between them. She lounged back gracefully against the cushions of the divan which faced the hearth, her feet, small, patrician, challenging in their silk and

satin, extended toward the cheerful blaze.

"Well?" she prompted, looking archly at him over her bare, gleaming shoulder, one rounded languid arm extended along the back of the settee, so that every curve and hollow of it called out to him. "You're still hesitant?"

"Don't, Maude." His tone was suppliant, but there was a tense tremor in it which pleased her, significant of the effort which this restraint was costing him.

"Still unpersuaded?" she persisted. He set his jaw.

"Don't—it's not fair. You know that here—in my house—I'm on my honor to play the game fairly. You know I've got to remember that you're Amy's guest—and mine. Don't torture me."

She laughed lightly. "What an absurd distinction, Howard! Don't you see that what's wrong anywhere is wrong everywhere? Can't you realize that if it's unworthy of you to love me when you're in your house, it's just as unworthy when you're in my apartment? You quibble with your tender conscience, my friend. You amuse me."

He clung to his position. "We don't see it the same way at all. I can't help feeling as I do. It's ungenerous of you not to respect my conventions as I've respected yours. This situation, to my view, is simply impossible. It's got to end. Either you're going or I am. I can't stay here—with you—and Amy. It's horrible. I'm amazed that you don't see it."

"My thanks for the compliment," she laughed. "You take life more seriously than I suspected, I perceive. I fancied that you saw eye to eye with me. You—you profess to love me, after all, despite the obstacle of your marriage. I concede, too, that until to-night you have been convincing in the rôle. Yet, if the minor detail of time and place can make this love seem wrong to you, I wonder that you are blind to the fact that the love itself, regardless of lesser circumstance, is

far more reprehensible—according to accepted codes.”

“I know it. Did I ever try to deny it? I know it’s wrong—all wrong, from the very beginning. I couldn’t resist it, but I never deceived myself about it. I begged you to marry me—to let me ask Amy for my freedom, to—”

“To cheat at the cards, in short—to drug your conscience with a legal quibble! Because, by hiring a venal lawyer and swearing to a few lies in a divorce-mill court, you can win a technical right to marry me, you propose that we deny our love for months, that we break up your wife’s home and shatter her pleasant, sunny little life to pieces, that I surrender my career—I am edified, Howard. I did not suspect that you—”

“Suspect? I told you from the very first—I begged and pleaded with you to let me get my freedom—to marry me—”

“To be sure. And all the while I flattered myself that your motive was one rather more complimentary than a mere scruple of old-fashioned conscience. I thought you wanted to marry me in order to be surer of me than you could otherwise be, in order to have more of my society than is possible under the present circumstances. I fancied that your conscience was in abeyance, in fact. You amused me, a little, by what I thought your innocence, by your fantastic conviction that marriage is a permanent institution, to which you clung in the very face of your desire to smash that institution to small pieces by a collusive divorce. I thought it rather touching that you should not grasp the fact that the reason you are straying from your present wife lies in the excessive degree to which marriage has kept you together—that the chief charm of romance is its furtive, surreptitious flavor. If I married you I should be bored to tears within the fortnight—and you would probably echo that mood. As it has been with us, we have seen just enough of each other to keep the romance

young and alluring; we have spiced our love with the peppery sting of impropriety. Stolen fruits have continued sweet on our lips.”

He stared at her blankly throughout the outburst. It seemed incredible to him that this woman was the same who had thrilled him from the beginning with the depth of her emotions, the sweetness of her surrender, the wonderful, dear purity which somehow sanctified even a furtive intrigue with a halo of honor and righteousness.

“You—you never talked like this,” he managed to say, at last.

She laughed lightly.

“Naturally. One does not. Illusions are fragile things at best. When one plays at the let’s-pretend of love, one sedulously avoids the realities. When the objective is to delude oneself, it would be folly to keep pinching an arm to make sure of remaining alertly awake. I carefully dinned into my own ears that I adored you—for the time being. I avoided unpleasant facts as persistently as I could. Now that it’s over—”

“Over!” The word burst from him like a groan. “You can’t mean that—that this is the end of everything—I won’t believe it—you’re pretending—some absurd notion of shielding Amy—that’s it. I see it all, now—you’re trying to cure me of my madness by feigning a coarse materialism which you know would repel me. You can’t trick me, Maude—I love you—I—”

She laughed.

“I’m frightfully fond of your wife,” she admitted. “She’s a delightful person, and I’d go far to avoid hurting her. That’s quite true. It was partly on her account that I’ve been so—so careful. No one suspects. And since I’ve come to know her better—especially since I came down here to-day, I’ve liked her more than I thought it possible for me to like another woman. That shocks you, I perceive. You fancy that I should manifest a more fitting jealousy of the woman who has what I have not? I thought so!”

“You’ve no reason to be jealous of

Amy," he said sullenly. "She and I mean nothing to each other. You're pretending—trying to play her game for her. I see through it, Maude. It's no use—"

Again she laughed. "My dear, incorrigible Puritan, I'm permitting myself the unusual luxury of stating the simple truth. You amused me. It pleased me to observe your complete infatuation, to pretend, for a little, that I reciprocated something of it, especially as I did not at once perceive your attitude toward me and toward life. I gave you the benefit of some little doubt—erroneously it appears. The play has ended rather sooner than I anticipated. The curtain is about to descend. I am genuinely in your debt for your behavior to-night; it completed my disillusion. Had you played the ardent lover I might have been deceived a little longer. But I find no especial charm in the devotion of a man who stops to parley with his conscience and his code when my arms are stretched toward him. Good night, Howard. And—yes—good-bye, too. I'll relieve your agitated sense of the proprieties by taking myself off in the morning."

He stammered helplessly as she rose and crossed the room toward the stairs, but she only smiled at him, the amused, condescending smile of enlightenment toward innocence.

Slowly she mounted the steps, without looking back at the landing. He realized that he had lost her.

Gradually his sense of loss gave way to injured pride. This, then, was the reward of his decency, his consideration, his eager desire to protect her against scandalous tongues and scornful, pointing fingers! To be dismissed with amused contempt, as a tiresome, puritanical bore! For weeks he had lived with a conviction that he was a heroic figure in a great and gripping drama, had been a little awed at himself, as an impressive sinner, a Lucifer fallen from the clouds. It was distasteful to be told that he was merely a masquerader, an ass below the lion's skin.

A slow anger woke against the woman who had played with him.

How he had been deceived in her! How grievously he had overestimated her depth, her character, her soul. Why, she was nothing, after all, but a light woman, an adventuress, amusing herself idly with men's lives and men's hearts and men's souls! And for her he had blackened himself with ineradicable shame! For her he had been false to his oaths of faith and steadfastness! For her he had deserted Amy, Amy who loved him so completely that she took him as a matter of course, Amy who was so childishly sure of him that the possibility of his dereliction had never even occurred to her!

Conscience overwhelmed him with a sudden flood of tenderness for Amy. A host of sleeping memories awoke, lavender-scented recollections of the early days together, bitter-sweet flashes of remembrance which shamed and fascinated him at once. He knew, suddenly, that it was Amy he had loved—always and only. And, in the realization, he saw his duty plain before him.

He must tell her!

The theory that confession atones is an ingenious device. When we have outrageously abused confidence, fallen short of others' belief in us, and conscience rises to scourge us for the fault, how delightfully simple to assuage the pangs by running with the tale to those we have wronged! How noble to shatter their fond convictions regarding us! What an admirable porous-plaster for our own spiritual lumbago, this system of thrusting unwelcome and dismaying truth on those who might be happy still in ignorance! Your true puritan is invariably a facile confessor.

Howard Warrener leaped at the idea avidly. Amy would be crushed, stricken, but she would forgive him! He yearned for her ear at once, while the fever lay on him. Her tears would wash away his offense.

He set out, afoot, to meet her at her sister's house, to ride home with her. He would pour out the ugly story during that ride. He would tell her every-

thing—abase himself at her feet, win her pardon before he re-entered the house profaned by Maude Parrish's presence.

He paused, mentally, at the problem of confessing Maude's part in the affair. A surviving touch of decency urged that he had no right to include her in his soul-washings, but he remembered how she had flouted all his nobler instincts, how she had deceived and abused him, and he hardened his heart against her. Amy should know the whole truth, sparing nobody! He would show her what manner of viper she had warmed in her bosom—it ministered gratefully to his lacerated self-esteem to reflect upon the magnificent superiority to false conventions he was about to display in thus exposing his partner in crime. He would make an absolutely clean breast of it all. Then, when Amy had forgiven him, they would begin fresh at the beginning, start life anew. He was uplifted as he dwelt on this prospect, so intent upon it, indeed, that he narrowly missed annihilation when his own car, scudding recklessly about a curve, whisked past his elbow and hurtled on into the night.

He recognized it instantly and realized that he was almost a mile from home, that he had left no instructions to cover this contingency, that he must either walk on to the house Amy had just left and there telephone for the car, or else retrace his steps.

He elected the latter. It would spare him the distraction of conversation with Bill Venner—Amy's brother-in-law, whom he disliked intensely, and also give him further opportunity to rehearse and perfect the phrases of his confession. He walked slowly back as he had come.

The lower floor was dark when he arrived, but there was a light in Amy's room. He paused outside to contemplate it. Amy's room! How little it had meant in his life, of late; how much, how wonderfully much, it was to mean hereafter!

He let himself in with his latch-key and made his way upstairs without en-

countering any one. The servants were probably asleep by this time, as the hall lights had been extinguished.

He went to his own room, instinctively following the habit of years. It communicated with Amy's apartments through a roomy corridor he had used as an overflow clothes-press since its original purpose had been permitted to lapse. The door at the farther end was locked, but his ring held a master-key which opened it readily enough. It let him into the small chamber which Amy used as a sitting-room semi-occasionally.

Here, a prey to sudden fainting of resolve, he paused, hesitant.

The door into Amy's bedroom had been removed from its hinges and the opening was masked by nothing more substantial than a heavy curtain. Voices came clearly to his ears, Amy's quick, careless speech first and then Maude's more deliberate and measured cadences. He was angry that Maude should be here, brazenly profaning this shrine of virtue; his sense of the decencies cried out against it.

He stepped toward the curtain, forgetting his fears in the rage which woke at the situation. As his hand was raised to draw it aside he stopped once more. Maude's voice checked him.

"I might have guessed," she said. "I ought to have seen at once that you're not the sort of a woman to be blind very long. But I'm curious, all the same. It's odd that you should have cared about me—liked me. I know you weren't pretending about that. You really did—"

"Of course I did." Amy's tone was matter-of-fact. "I like you frightfully. That's why I asked you down, you silly."

There was a brief pause.

Warrener knew that Maude's eyes were mutely questioning.

He waited, breathlessly intent, for the elucidation of his wife's Delphic utterance.

"I'm afraid I don't see it." Maude's tone was puzzled. "I thought you had me down to kill the affair in the good

old fashion—by giving him more of me than he could stand. I guessed that, as soon as you told me that you knew about us. Why—?”

Amy's laugh interrupted. “You'd naturally think of that. I didn't. It was on your account, of course. I couldn't stand it to let you risk a cropper over Howard. I knew he'd lose his head directly and run amuck—men like him never have any sense of proportion, you know. It would be exactly like Howard to kick up some open scandal, with the best of motives—try some wild notion of getting me to divorce him—and incidentally make no end of trouble for you. I knew him, you see, and it was quite evident that you didn't. So I thought I'd give you a chance to see enough of him as he really is, before you'd gone too far to get out. I knew you'd get rid of him as soon as you saw through him. You're a lot too good to be bothered by a man like him. He suits me as a husband because I've trained him to let me alone. He doesn't bore me—much. I'm used

to him. But he'd be a frightful pest for you. You aren't the type to endure a stick—very long.”

She yawned frankly.

Warrener recognized the sound and his mind painted the scene vividly—Amy's arms thrust out akimbo, her fingers clenched, her small, white even teeth displayed in a double, parted row.

It struck him suddenly that he had seen her yawn rather often in the seven years they had spent together.

The quick pat-a-pat of a palm on lips—the gesture in which Amy's luxurious yawns invariably ended, came to him.

“And Heavens!” said Amy's voice, “*what* a stick he is!”

There was a pause, ended by her giggle.

“I'm glad he is,” she declared, more in her normally vivacious manner. “King Log suits me best, and Howard is certainly a timber king. Good night, Maudie—I'm so glad you've found him out in time.”



FOR THE THIRD TIME

By John Hamilton

FOR the third time that week I saw her standing under the pergola in the garden.

For the third time I longed, with fearless cupidity, to kiss her.

For the third time I vaulted through the window and fell headlong into a prickly hedge below.

For the third time James came down the terrace and assisted me to my feet.

For the third time my wife appeared at the window and said: “Is he drunk again, James?”

For the third time James replied: “Yes, madame—trying to kiss that statue again.”



JEALOUSY: the sneaking feeling that someone is superior.



CLERGYMEN

By Willard Wattles

I LIKE clergymen . . . oleaginous, dapper, anemic, lofty, suave, cadaverous, child-like, Oscar Wilde-like, respectable, risqué, hard-shell, soft-shell, poached, shirred, fricasseed; clergymen who drink cocktails, flirt, look solemn, shake hands, pat children, wave tea-cups, keep their little fingers straight, golf, quote Henry Van Dyke, simper, smirk, intone, run Packards; clergymen who have you sorted, ticketed, labeled, predestined,—“There you are, there *she* is, here am I, *Gaudeamus igitur!*”; clergymen who crochet, give sex talks, tat, tattle, embrace you, claim they didn’t descend from monkeys.

Some day I hope to meet a clergyman who swears, fights, goes fishing, blushes, drinks beer, plays hobby-horse with his own children, eats peanuts, boxes, goes to picture-shows, reads Shaw, knows forty varieties of birds, quotes Scripture without ogling the zenith, really understands the Book of Job.



THE LIVING GOD

By John Hanlon

IT seems strange that now,
When the other gods are forgotten,
Only I,—Pan, the mad one,
Live in man’s memory.

Juno’s power is less than the strength of a butterfly’s wings.
Venus has been fettered in placid prisons of marble:
But, when the white goats leap upon the hillside,
When violets spring from my hoof-prints in the marsh,
When over everything steals a soft, quaint melody,
Then the poets wink their eyes and say:
“It is Pan who is piping!”



A MORALIST is one who believes that a man with a future can never have a past and a woman with a past can never have a future.



LE VIEUX LÉGIONNAIRE

By Sylvain Déglantine

POURQUOI le père Mathias était-il surnommé la Vaillance et pourquoi portait-il un ruban rouge à la boutonnrière de son veston gris fortement râpé? Voilà ce que l'on se demandait en voyant venir le bonhomme du côté des tentes où campait la légion étrangère en attendant son départ pour le Maroc.

Certes, le ruban rouge justifiait pleinement le sobriquet, et celui-ci le port du ruban rouge, mais. . .

Sous sa moustache furieusement tire-bouchonnée, le bonhomme fumait certaine grosse pipe avec une satisfaction qui sentait fortement le vétéran vieilli sous le harnais; cependant, il y en a bien d'autres qui fument délicieusement une bonne pipe sans avoir, pour cela, bouché la gueule des canons avec leur tête.

Toujours est-il qu'on se sentait un brin de respect pour le vieux de la vieille, et qu'on était tenté de le saluer quand il passait devant les marmites de l'escouade.

Ce jour-là, le caporal n'y tint plus. L'énigme lui faisait horreur, il voulait pénétrer le secret du père Mathias.

Quand celui-ci passa devant la marmite, d'où montait l'odeur appétissante du bouillon, le caporal se leva:

—Hé! hé! monsieur la Vaillance, dit-il en montrant les marmites; vous plairait-il d'en goûter? Ça vous rappellerait les anciens jours.

Le bonhomme s'arrêta un peu surpris, et regarda le *frichti* d'un œil plus éloquent que la parole. Il répondit, en se grattant l'oreille:

—Ma foi, voilà qui ne me ferait pas déplaisir; seulement un convive de

plus, ça réduit la part de tous, et quand la pitance est maigre. . .

—Bah! on n'y fera pas attention; un peu de plus, un peu de moins, ça ne nous empêchera pas de filer sur Oran, de là sur Fez, et de flanquer aux Marocains une de ces tournées dont la légion a coutume de gratifier les moricauds qui ont l'audace de vouloir se mesurer avec elle.

—Et puis, on peut arroser la gamelle avec une bouteille de vin, avança le bonhomme.

Parfaitement. Vive le père la Vaillance!

Le vétéran s'asseyait auprès des tentes, sous les dattiers qui répandent sur le sable éblouissant une ombre mêlée de soleil. Un légionnaire court chercher quelques bouteilles à la cantine installée tout près. La repas commence, agrémenté par les réflexions du nouveau convive.

—Votre *frichti* est bon, les enfants. De mon temps, on faisait aussi de la fameuse gargote, mais enfin la vôtre est excellente. Ah! les heureux jours que l'on passait dans cette fameuse légion! Faut vous dire que je m'étais engagé là par coup de tête, à dix-huit ans. . . Une amie d'enfance, que j'avais comme ça pour promesse et qui s'était mariée, un beau matin, avec un vieux qui avait le sac. Ce qu'on en a fait, de ces campagnes contre les Arbis! L'ennuyeux, par exemple, c'était la marmite de l'escouade. Celle à quatre hommes était encore dans les cartons administratifs à cette époque; le règne de l'unique marmite par escouade battait son plein. Non qu'on y fit du mauvais bouillon, loin de là; seulement il fallait la porter d'une étape à l'autre,

et c'était à qui ne l'aurait pas sur le dos, vous comprenez ?

Les auditeurs comprenaient parfaitement, et chacun se demandait comment il aurait bien pu faire pour couper à cette corvée par trop supplémentaire.

De la soupe, il ne restait plus rien, les bouteilles étaient vides ; un ancien tira de son sac un paquet de tabac et le présenta au père la Vaillance.

La bonne vieille grosse pipe fut bourrée jusqu'à la gauche, une allumette lui fit un chapeau de feu, les langues, déliées par le jus de la grappe, entamèrent quelques discussions.

Néanmoins, l'entrain manquait.

C'est qu'une langue se montrait passablement engourdie au gré de l'assistance, celle du père Mathias.

Le vieux brave était là, les bras croisés, le chapeau de travers, les yeux sur les marmites renversées, béatement absorbé dans la fumée de sa pipe.

Il ne paraissait pas du tout disposé à raconter la fameuse aventure qui lui valait le ruban rouge.

La gamelle qu'il venait de manger en était cependant le prix bien compté.

Le caporal finit par rompre la glace :

— Monsieur la Vaillance, demanda-t-il, vous avez été officier, sans doute ?

— Officier ?

— Dame ! il n'y a guère que les officiers qui aient la croix.

— N'empêche que je n'ai jamais eu de galons sur les manches et que je porte quand même le ruban rouge.

— Voilà qui prouve suffisamment votre surnom. Mais alors, il vous a fallu accomplir quelque brillant fait d'armes. La croix n'est pas donnée au simple soldat pour un coup de balai dans la cour du quartier, bigre !

— Certes non, et je crois pouvoir affirmer, sans me donner des gants, que la mienne n'a pas été volée.

Le vieux brave s'arrêta un instant à regarder des coins de désert s'allonger en rubans jaunes entre les dattiers, sous le soleil couchant, comme pour chercher ses souvenirs dans le crépuscule ; puis il reprit, la voix vibrante, le geste large :

— C'était à la bataille de l'Isly. La charge sonnait, nous courions le long

de la rivière sous une grêle de balles. Les camarades tombaient de tous côtés, on serrait les rangs la rage au cœur. A cinquante mètres des lignes ennemies, une fusillade plus nourrie disloqua la colonne ; notre porte-drapeau se trouva isolé avec quelques légionnaires. Les Marocains l'ont aperçu ; il est entouré, ses compagnons mordent la poussière, lui-même s'abat, le crâne ouvert d'un coup de yatagan ; un Arabe a saisi la hampe. Une clameur retentit dans nos rangs ; on bondit en avant ; mais le feu des Marocains redouble, des paquets de cavaliers nous chargent à fond de train, des vides se creusent parmi nous, les plus braves hésitent, lâchent pied. . . . Alors, la vision du pays natal passa devant mes yeux. Ma mère était là et tous ceux que j'aimais. Ce drapeau, c'était l'honneur de leur race, c'était la gloire de leur passé. Leurs regards et leurs gestes me le montraient, désespérés ; et la voix de ma mère, de ma mère surtout, implorait, dominant la mêlée : "Va, meurs s'il le faut, mais sauve-le !" Je me suis élancé, une ligne de feu balafre le front des groupes ennemis, les balles sifflent à mes oreilles ; mais je ne les entends plus ; mes pas se précipitent, ma baïonnette défonce des poitrines ; je couche d'un coup de crosse celui qui s'était emparé du drapeau, et, faisant flotter haut nos trois couleurs, couvert du sang qui gicle de mes blessures, saisi de la démente du carnage, je fais un bond vers les Marocains en criant :

— A moi ceux qui ont du cœur !

Mon appel est entendu. Des camarades redressent la tête, m'aperçoivent. On se regarde, on s'appelle ; un frisson d'héroïsme secoue les escouades, les officiers lèvent leur sabre, saisissent au collet ceux qui voudraient encore reculer ; la colonne rompue se reforme, on se sent les coudes, on accourt sur mes pas au-devant des balles, les Marocains sont abordés, et, dans un cri de victoire sorti de toutes les bouches, je plante mon drapeau au milieu du camp que l'ennemi en fuite abandonne.

Le lendemain, je portais un beau ruban rouge, tout neuf, sur ma capote usée.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PHILISTIA

By George Jean Nathan

NOTHING is so essentially undramatic as clear thinking. Various attempts to devise serious drama out of the thoughtful figures of history—out, even, of reflective figures of the playwright's fancy—have for the most part rolled the stone of Sisyphus. A play with John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer or Renan for its central role would last out probably one evening in the theater. The meditative man, when employed for purposes of the playhouse, must, if he would be used at all, be made the figure of farce *in nubibus*, as with Napoleon in "Sans Gène" and "The Man of Destiny," or the figure of cheap gilt-furniture comedy, as with Disraeli in the play of Louis N. Parker. For the needs of the stage, the thinker must be operated upon, his heart placed in his head, his mind placed in his bosom. It is, indeed, the first rule of the acting stage that the hero must not think out the drama to its conclusion but that, *per contra*, the drama must think out the hero to his conclusion.

In plainer phrase, the central figure of a play must be influenced not from within, but from without. If, for example, one were to write a play with Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche as the hero, the drama would needs be generated and carried on to its climactic consummation not by that gentleman's energetic mind and philosophies, but rather by the objection to that energetic mind and those philosophies on the part of the leading lady. There can be no substantial thought in the drama of the stage. Such drama is created rather out of a contradiction and negation of thought: by proving either that the

thought in point, while sound up to eleven o'clock, is then and finally impracticable if not, indeed, ridiculous (as in the instance of Mr. Shaw's Tanner) or that, while the thought may have been quite rational around quarter after ten o'clock in Act II, it had not yet at that time realized that its wife was in a family way or that its loved one was dying of tuberculosis, and so witnessed its own intrinsic vacuity.

Drama in its entirety consists in the surrender of accurate and judicious thinking to emotionalism: either to the emotions of its central figure or to the emotions of its second figure (symbolic of the mob emotion) operating upon that central figure and forcing him, breathless and beaten, to the wall. For the disparate victory of an Under-shaft or a Trigorin, there are the thousand routs of the Johannes Vockerats and Gabriel Schillings. The clock strikes eleven and the Jules Lemaitres of "Révoltée" and "L'Age Difficile," the Briexs of "La Foi," the Sudermanns of "Der Sturmeselle Sokrates," anaesthetize their minds and deck their hearts with daisies. But, here I wander probably somewhat afield—afield from the popular stage.

The logic of the popular stage is a logic "not of facts, but of sensations and sentiments." When Hamlet and Iago, when Brand and Orgon spake truth or made to think, such thoughts were kept apart from the direct action of the drama and from the ears of such other characters as might interpose objection to them, in soliloquies and asides. The thoughts so spoken were mere *pourboires* tossed by dramatist to audience, mere refractory golden pen-

nies—the literary man triumphing momentarily over the stage merchant. The imperturbable *raisonneurs* of such drama as Georg Hirschfeld's "At Home," Hartleben's "Education for Marriage," Andriev's "Savva," Wedekind's "Pandora's Box"—even such drama as Galsworthy's "Eldest Son" or the Howard-Mizner "Only Law" (a play greatly underrated)—are not for the popular stalls.

The heart must do the thinking in the mob drama. The mind of the stage protagonist must never be more alert, more deeply informed, more practised, than the mind of the average man who pays his two dollars for a chair in the auditorium. And I beg of my dear reader that he remember this when, upon concluding these remarks, he will feel himself moved to dispatch me a saucy letter on the dubiety of my designation of certain stage heroes as thinkers. I use the word, of course, but comparatively: I am charitable, for argument's sake, to the paradox.

Marivaux observed that he did not believe the playwright should be prohibited from thinking. The playwright, true enough, may not be prohibited from thinking—up to his last act; but woe to him, popularly speaking, if he keep his reason cool and clear to final falling curtain. I here allude, of course, to the maker of what the public knows as serious drama, that is to say drama, good or bad, purged of humour. This is why present-day playwrights possessed of even half-way valid ideas seek to protect their box-office revenues by giving their ideas a farcical garb—and even so, as witness the instance of Brioux and "Les Hanneçons" (the idea of which is a haul from Flaubert), frequently in the Anglo-Saxon theater fail. Such playwrights appreciate that it is essential, if they would play with ideas in the theater, first to impress the audience (by pretending the play is farce) with the notion that the ideas are ridiculous, thus gaining the audience's willingness to listen to opinions which the audience has not heard be-

fore, and thus also to flatter the audience's ignorance by assuring it that the ideas are mere nonsense and with no foundation in philosophy or fact. This, as well known, is the method of Shaw. George Birmingham, in his excellent "John Regan," was less successful than his Irish colleague in captivating the yokelery for the reason that he permitted his farce to be slightly too logical and so raised the yokelery's suspicions that, after all, there might be a grain of truth in his central idea. The same idea was used, several years before Birmingham employed it, in a farce manner more susceptible of box-office hospitality by a Spanish dramatist. In order to avoid all danger of failure—even in more practised Berlin—Schmidt, having a good idea, wrote two entirely different endings to one of his farces and experimented publicly with both in order to determine which was the less in accord with dispassionate logic and hence more likely to charm trans-Channel and trans-Atlantic auditoriums were his play to be produced at a distance.

When the thoughtful man is lifted on to the illuminated platform, the cautious playmaker exercises a care sedulously to eliminate from the character all suspicion of the mind that has identified him in history. For the cautious playmaking fellow appreciates that "the conception of theatrical art as the exploitation of popular superstition and ignorance, as the thrilling of poor bumpkins with ghosts and blood, exciting them with blows and stabs, duping them with tawdry affectations of rank and rhetoric, thriving parasitically on their moral diseases instead of purging their souls and refining their senses: this is the tradition that the theater finds it hard to get away from." And so the playmaker presents Cromwell (Charles Cartwright's "Colonel Cromwell") in terms of an ancestral Chauncey Olcott, Dante (Sardou's) in terms of a paleo-Laurence Hope, and Jesus Christ ("Ben Hur") as a spot-light.

The sober, serious figures of history, when dramatized for the stalls, are box-

officed into so many Mascarilles of "Les Précieuses," Crispins of "Le Légataire" and Scapins of "Les Fourberies," with right hands inserted into the bosoms of Prince Alberts and brows a-wrinkle with the weighty problems imparted by a brown lining-pencil and a touch of Mascaro.

In the drama of yesterday, it was requisite that the heroine's body be compromised; in the drama of to-day, it is requisite that the hero's mind be compromised. However substantial the thought which the playwright causes to motivate his hero, the playwright must bear in mind this established Anglo-Saxon formula: Act I, the hero has a sound idea; Act II, he becomes doubtful as to the soundness of his idea; Act III, he is convinced that his sound idea is absurd. Whether the hero is of the J. Rufus Wallingford order or of the rarer order of the central personage of Galsworthy's "The Mob" (though it must be confessed that Galsworthy is in general one of the exceptions), the thing holds true. And if to this there comes interposed the contention that, after all, it is only nature that one's philosophy, whatever its strength and vitality, be riddled in the many ambuscades on the great highway of life, one may but answer with Sir Leslie Stephen that he never saw the word "nature" without instinctively putting himself on his guard against some bit of slipshod criticism or sham philosophy, and that he heartily wished the word could be turned out of the language. The truth of the matter, of course, is that for the most part these last-act changes of philosophy and viewpoint are brought about not by God's nature, but by the Shuberts'. The hero's philosophy is influenced in the contemporaneous Anglo-Saxon drama less by the bearing upon his own brain of the force of other brains than by the scent of a woman's hair, Christmas bells or the spectacle of a small blonde child creeping down the stairs in a nightgown. For this drama, in the line of the Major Barbara that was, declines to regard that there are larger loves and

diviner dreams than the fireside ones. But—

To blame this condition of affairs, as our current-drifting playwrights are forever so affectionate in blaming it, entirely upon the audience, seems a trifle short-sighted even to one, like myself, who appreciates only too well from long and intimate contact the vulgarity and opalescence of the listless groups of bedizened pot-wallopers who smell out of court by their very patronage all that may be beautiful and worth-while in drama. Why should sound thinking, thought that sparkles and crackles like burning diamond dust, ideas that, like so many rings of smoke, dissolve into wistful smiles and musings—why should these be believed irrevocably to be not the food of which theatrical amusement and stimulation are made? The notion that the emotions of a group of persons gathered into a theater auditorium to witness drama will respond only—or at least chiefly—to a like set of emotions displayed upon the platform before them is pretty poor psychology. The notion that such an audience may be made to cry only by showing it an actress sniffing or be made to feel joyful only by exhibiting to it an ingénue sticking her nose gleefully into a bouquet of sweet peas and meanwhile hopping on one foot, seems a sorry conceit. And by audience, in this connection and by way of reassurance, is meant not what Dryden, in another direction, described as souls of the highest rank and truest understanding, but that mob something which is ever given less to caviar than to sausage.

There are certainly more audience tears, speaking practically from the standpoint of the popular theater, in such a reflective, hard and unsentimental philosophy as is contained in Shaw's Caesar's reply to Shaw's Cleopatra, "Shall it be Mark Antony?", than there are in a round dozen such artificial quasi-throat-lumps as Mr. Broadhurst's Henry Mapleson's quavering "You shall have diamonds and pearls, my dear, diamonds and pearls." There is a louder commercial laughter

in a philosophic line like Schnitzler's on the sentimentality of a lady's stomach than in fifty allusions on the part of a fat man in a green waistcoat to Peoria, Ill., or even to Josephus Daniels. Which, let me ask in the vernacular of the theater, makes you "feel sadder": the sight of an emotional John Mason bellowing and salting upon the bosom of an emotional Jane Cowl in a "Common Clay," or the ring of such a bit of worldly philosophy as concludes Lennox Robinson's "Patriots" when the fiery zealot, come to inflame and impassion his fellow-countrymen, is informed by the janitor of the hall which he finds empty, that "they've all gone t' the movin' pictures,"—or the ring of such an observation as comes from Ferrand's lips in "The Pigeon"? Which makes you laugh louder: such a passage as Mr. Harry B. Smith's "What is that you are playing, Mr. Dusenberry?" Mr. Dusenberry: "The piano," bandied by a grotesquely clad spinster and a comedian in a sailor suit—or such a passage as that between Illingworth and the lady in the first act of "A Woman of No Importance"?

. . . The plays of Wilde will live on the stage long after the plays of Mr. George V. Hobart are forgotten. The plays of Shakespeare and Molière will probably survive the plays of Alfred Sutro and Jules Eckert Goodman.

The theory that a dramatic audience's emotions will inevitably respond largely, if not only, to a literal picturization upon the stage of those same emotions is akin to the theory that an impressionable art-lover will, upon entering the Glyptothek in Munich and beholding the statue of Mercury, forthwith feel like undressing himself—or, somewhat more pertinently, that the lusty laughter of Feste and Falstaff will bring out an equally lusty laughter on the part of their auditors. The opposite is, of course, true. The laughter of the Merry Wives depresses one, as the tyranny of the tears of Haddon Chambers' heroine exhilarates one.

The stage, true enough, is intrinsically not the place for thought, but one

may therefore no more fairly say that thought cannot, and successfully, be placed there than one may say that James Huneker should not contribute to the pages of *Puck*. It is much like Huneker's own retort to the solemn savant of the *Evening Post* who lamented that the critic should be writing serious articles in a funny paper. "It doesn't strike me as any more incongruous," replied our James, "than your writing funny articles in a serious paper." Freud would be Freud in the pages of *Fliegende Blätter*; Bourget would be Bourget in the pages of *Le Rire*; Havelock Ellis would be Havelock Ellis in the pages of the *Pink 'Un*; a smart intelligence would still, despite the distractions of gamesome lights and enameled cheesecloths, be intelligible and remunerative in the theater. I have said, in my first sentence, that nothing is so essentially undramatic as clear thinking. Had I not better had said that nothing is so essentially undramatic as the theater which believes this to be true and practises, so rigorously, its faith?

L'Envoi

SUCH a piece, however, as Shaw's fantastic "Getting Married," presented lately for the first time in America in the Booth under the auspices of Mr. Faversham—a piece that comes more or less under the head of a play of ideas—misses of effect in the theater for the simple reason that it was never meant seriously by the author for the theater. "Getting Married" is no more a theater play than "Shenandoah" is a book play. The notion that any piece of writing is suited to the theater merely because the names of its characters are indented and their physical movements italicized is, despite Mr. Shaw's cunning and not altogether unconvincing cajolery of the notion, a little like believing drama to be only a matter of typography. The truth is that this manuscript of Shaw's is pretty uncomfortable going in the playhouse. In the library it is amusing enough—for the simple reason that there but the eye, as

the viaduct to the mind, is called upon to engage it. In the theater, it misses for the equally simple reason that not only the eye, but the ear as well—to say nothing (recalling vividly the hardness of the chair in J 14) of the nether physiology—are called upon to attend and receive it. Where, therefore, in the library the manuscript gives ample return for the exercise of a single organ, in the theater it seems somehow to be overcharging the physical effort of its reception two-and-threefold. For in this manuscript there is no call, as there is call in other manuscripts of Shaw, for a pinchable wench to charm the vision as Cleopatra, for a Drury Lane lion to antic its way with physical jinks into one's surface humours, for the ear-tickling furies and cussings of a giant to the Russian court, for the haze of a Joseph Harker moonlit Nile nor the fisticuffs of an athletic young mummer. And so there is small call here to dim the reading lamp and raise the footlights.

"Getting Married" is Shaw at his weakest: the great ballyhoo hard at work before the tent when all the freaks are off, for the time being, having their lunch. There is, of course, wit to the piece—here and there a liberal sprinkling—but the resident impression is of the character in "The Fortune Teller" who had a good joke and wanted to get someone to write a musical comedy around it. The manuscript reminds one of a Wilde epigram rewritten by Dosztoievski.

II

THAT the wildest improbability may be taken for the postulate of a play is a theory which regularly projects the majority of our critics into something of a sweat. They wad the air with gaudy *mots* on the unity of this or that, on the holding up of the mirror, on the quality of reasonability in the initial premise and on many other such groceries about which the person seeking amusement in a theater gives not a continental. Forgetting, as has often been

pointed out, that, from four hundred and sixty-eight years before the birth of Christ—when the most successful play of the day ("Oedipus Rex") showed its audience a hero who, when he came on the stage, had been married for twelve years to his own mother, who, in turn, throughout all that time had never had a talk with him on the past which might have given him any suspicion of her identity or of the fact that he had murdered his own father—down to the present moment, when one of the most successful plays of the day ("Justice") thoroughly convinces its New York audiences of its local applicability despite its New York audiences' non-recognition of section 887 of the Penal Law and section 2,188 of the Penal Code, which make the play, from the local and native point of view, ridiculous—forgetting, as I say, that improbability has utterly nothing to do with a play's chances for success and effectiveness, whether commercially or artistically.

The most recent play to come in for such strictures is—a farce, to boot, mind you—the "Good Gracious Annabelle" of Miss Clare Kummer, a deliberately fantastic affair designed only, by a wild discharge of artless humours, to jabberwock its auditors and give them a bit of careless fun in the playhouse. These strictures are not difficult to expect, since they are ever vouchsafed us by the professors when a piece slightly different from the general is brought to the community's attention. They appeared in full force, it is interesting to recall, when, twenty-six years ago, "Paris Fin de Siècle" was charming the French capital and when "The Cabinet Minister" was crowding the theaters of the British. And the critical strictures were in these instances largely of a piece with the critical strictures now visited upon the entertaining play by Miss Kummer. To object, as objection is currently made, to the antic unreality of Miss Kummer's little play, is to object to the final scene of Augier's "Le Gendre de M. Poirier"—the best scene in the play and probably Au-

gier's best fragment of dramatic composition. Another play, "Come Out of the Kitchen," by Mr. A. E. Thomas out of a novel by somebody or other, and also on view in the metropolitan theater at the present time, concerns itself with a story the same as that employed by Miss Kummer. And this same story it handles with a precise regard for all those rule-books of technic so close to the fancy of the grave and literal-minded critical whisker. And the result? The play is not only not one-tenth so amusing as Miss Kummer's play, but, into the bargain, it is a substantial fact that—so far as its story goes—"Come Out of the Kitchen" actually isn't one-half so convincing as the latter! Mr. Thomas elects to treat the fable of the aristocrat turned servant as rational comedy; Miss Kummer elects to treat it as moonstruck farce. The theatrical value of the latter approach must be at once patent. By initially assuring the audience that the theme is quite absurd, Miss Kummer need only, to achieve success, concern herself with making her spectators laugh. To the contrary, by initially assuring the audience that the theme is a semi-serious one, Mr. Thomas (being no Oliver Goldsmith) is compelled through the rest of the evening not only to devise ways and means to amuse his spectators, but in addition must waste a considerable and valuable portion of his allotted two hours in persuading his audience periodically of the reasonability of his characters and his characters' actions. The difference 'twixt the two entertainments is, therefore, the usual difference 'twixt local comedy and farce. The former is more often than not merely the latter without a sense of humour.

III

WHATEVER the merits or demerits of Mr. Langdon Mitchell's dramatization of Thackeray's novel "Pendennis" (presented by Mr. Williams with Mr. Drew in the central rôle), it must be submitted that not less ridiculous than cer-

tain of the criticisms of Miss Kummer's play are the majority of criticisms which have been directed against this work. It has been made the subject of vigorous critical objection that Mr. Mitchell has, in his dramatization of the novel, omitted all drama. Which, in view of the circumstance that in the novel itself there is no drama (*i. e.*, drama of the spasm sort that physics pleasurablely what Thackeray himself was fond of alluding to as "that great baby, the public"), seems just a trifle like lamenting that Rostand, in preparing the story of Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac for the stage, did not make the play more romantic for Mr. Mansfield's lady admirers by giving Cyrano a more lovely nose.

To object to a dramatization of "Pendennis" is an objection truly not without a measure of common sense. But to object to an undramatic dramatization of "Pendennis" is to object to Paderewski because he doesn't play the violin. Mr. Mitchell's purpose was to lift Thackeray onto the stage. It was apparently Mr. Mitchell's critics' desire that he lift the stage onto Thackeray. The notion that the stage, then, is not the place for an undramatic story such as this, is the sort of notion that would bar from the theater all manuscripts like "Anatol" and "Professor Bernhardi" and welcome in their stead chiefly such as "The Queen of the Opium Ring" and "The Witching Hour."

IV

THE Hopkinses, the Williamses, the Washington Square Players, the young folk who direct the destinies of the Neighbourhood Playhouse . . . these are bringing to the theater the youth, the ideas, the ideals, that the theater of the country needs. They may at times fail, may these youngsters, but you will find them failing, when fail they do, honourably and rather finely—in a way that brings them just a little closer to the heart. You will, you may be sure, never find them faltering with such obsolete mush as "The Baskers," the mon-

ocled dawdle lately offered in the Empire—nor with cheap Cinderella distillations, neo-morality plays, Sardou brews and the like banalities of the local platforms. Of some of the other recent efforts of this younger set I shall treat at considerable length on a future date—probably, however, in French lest (were my remarks written in the native tongue) some one of the old-order producing managers be whopped into a sudden frenzy of ambition and seek to prove to the community that he, too, is possessed of artistic and literary feeling by presenting something like Mr. Gilbert Murray's rhymed verse translation of the "Hippolytus," which, by virtue of my calling and the pretenses it forces one to live up to, I should then be compelled to sit through.

Meanwhile, however, a prefatory good word for Miss Rachel Crothers' "Old Lady 31," given us by one of the younger men, Mr. Lee Kugel. There is a Fulda touch to the genuine sentiment, a Bahr touch to the genuine humour, of this happy manuscript. A willowy comedy, well acted and eminently well worth the ear. And meanwhile, too, an introductory word of the highest praise for the bill discovered in the Neighbourhood Playhouse: a bill that includes a no less august trinity of presentations than Shaw's "Great Catherine" and "The Inca of Perusalem" and the latest play of Dunsany, "The Queen's Enemies." But of these, anon. They call, all of them, for a more careful consideration than I am able, this late in the present lecture, to accord them.

V

THAT anyone can write a play but that it takes genius to sit through one is instanced again in the case of "Fixing Sister," by Mr. William Hodge. Spectator at such a doings, one marvels at the cast of mind that could imagine a play of this kind and, having imagined it, could write it and, having written it, could act it. One can, of course, understand a merely bad play—I myself have

done so much bad work in my time that I am something of an authority on the subject and am prepared to debate anybody to establish my warrant—but it is almost impossible to understand a play so supreme in its badness as this. It is not the theme of Mr. Hodge's play that I speak of, though my confrères have permitted themselves several spoofs over it; for despite the cheap banality of the story of the noble homespun Americano who unmasks the villainy of the Duke it were possible still so to treat the fable as to make it humorous and not uninteresting. It is rather that upon this venerable *conte* Mr. Hodge has brought to bear a so deficient understanding of even the most obvious and cheapest theatrical tricks that the resultant play passes all comprehension. One does not, true, expect from an actor like Mr. Hodge a play of the literary qualities of a Galsworthy or the qualities of humour of a play by Harold Brighouse or even the merely stereotyped technical qualities of a piece by Augustus Thomas, but one has a right to expect from such an actor—an actor who has played in many bad plays—a play containing at least a share of the cheap, but effective, theatrical tricks which have projected the very sort of plays he has played in across the footlights. Yet Mr. Hodge does not even give his play the advantage of such hokums. His technique is simply to stand in the centre of the stage for two and one-half hours and bring on one character at a time to argue with him and be routed by his display of wisdom. The most patent stratagems of popular playmaking he overlooks. To point out that, even so, he annually makes a tidy sum out of his plays of this species and that money-making is the sole aim of Mr. Hodge in the promulgation of such plays is to argue through the nose. Barnum made plenty of money out of his main tent, but he made a great deal more when he put on the sideshows. An actor like Mr. John Hazzard could probably take Mr. Hodge's play and make something of it.

SUFFERING AMONG BOOKS

By H. L. Mencken

POLITENESS must be mingled delicately with criticism in dealing with "The Leatherstocking," by William Dean Howells, for it is the work of a man of eighty, and much high striving is behind him, and not a little sound accomplishment. On the whole, a superficial novelist, and not to be mentioned in the same breath with such men as Clemens, Dreiser and Norris, Dr. Howells has yet concocted three or four novels that belong to the top of the third rank; and at least one, "The Rise of Silas Lapham," that is a valuable and permanent contribution to our national literature. On the whole, a somewhat romantic and unintelligible critic, with a great gift for discovering bogus geniuses, he has nevertheless done some useful pioneering, notably for Turgeneff and Dostoevsky, and, to come nearer home, for such men as E. W. Howe, author of "The Story of a Country Town." And on the whole, an essayist of an empty and kittenish variety, he has still managed to be mildly entertaining, and to develop a style that often shows the pungent charm of the unexpected.

Americans always judge their authors, not as artists, but as men. Edgar Allan Poe, I daresay, will never live down the fact that he was a periodical drunkard. Mark Twain, the incomparable artist, will probably never shake off Mark Twain, the after-dinner comedian, the flaunter of white dress clothes, the public character, the national wag. As for Dr. Howells, he gains rather than loses by this confusion of values, for he is a highly respectable gentleman, a sitter on solemn committees, an intimate of college

presidents and reformers, a man vouched for by both the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Ladies' Home Journal*, and the result is his general acceptance as a member of the literary peerage, and of the rank of earl at least. For twenty years past his successive books have not been criticised, not even adequately reviewed; they have been merely hymned and fawned over. The dean of American letters in point of years, and in point of published quantity, and in point of public prominence and influence, he has been gradually enveloped in a web of superstitious reverence, and it grates harshly to hear his actual achievement discussed in cold blood.

Nevertheless, all this merited respect for an industrious and inoffensive man is bound, soon or late, to yield to a critical examination of the artist within, and that examination, I fear, will have its bitter moments for those who naively accept the current Howells legend. It will show, without doubt, a first-rate journeyman, a contriver of pretty things, a clever stylist—but it will also show a long row of uninspired and hollow books, with no more ideas in them than so many volumes of the *New Republic*, and no more deep and contagious feeling than so many reports of autopsies, and no more glow and gusto than so many tables of bond prices. The profound dread and agony of life, the surge of passion and aspiration, the grand crash and glitter of things, the tragedy that runs eternally under the surface—all this the critic of the future will seek in vain in Dr. Howells' urbane and shallow volumes. And seeking it in vain, he will prob-

ably dismiss all of them together with fewer words than he gives to "Huckleberry Finn" . . .

Intrinsically, "The Leatherwood God" is little more than a stale anecdote, and the dressing that Dr. Howells gives it does not lift it very far above this anecdotal quality. The central character, one Dylks, is a backwoods evangelist who acquires a belief in his own buncombe, and ends by announcing that he is God. The job before the author was obviously that of tracing the psychological steps whereby this mountebank proceeds to that conclusion; the fact, indeed, is recognized in the canned review, which says that the book is "a study of American religious psychology," and by the fair critic of the *New York Times*, who praises it as "a remarkable psychological study." But an inspection of the text shows that no such study is really in it. Dr. Howells does not *show* how Dylks came to believe himself God; he merely *says* that he did so. The whole discussion of the process, indeed, is confined to two pages—172 and 173—and it is quite infantile in its inadequacy. Nor do we get anything approaching a revealing look into the heads of the other converts—the saleratus-sodden, hell-crazy, half-witted Methodists and Baptists of a remote Ohio settlement of seventy or eighty years ago. All we have is the casual statement that they are converted, and begin to offer Dylks their howls of devotion. And when, in the end, they go back to their original bosh, dethroning Dylks overnight and restoring the gaseous vertebrate of Calvin and Wesley—when this contrary process is recorded, it is accompanied by no more illumination. In brief, the story is not a study at all, but simply a story—as I have said, an anecdote. Its characters reveal only what a passing glance would reveal; its dialogue is tedious; its well-made sub-plot is pointless; it skims the skin. There is not even the charm of good writing. Dr. Howells forgot his style as he forgot his psychology. Any fifth-rate nov-

elist might have put the thing together as well; there are dozens of American novelists who would have done it far better. . . . I surely hope I have been polite.

But what an invitation is in the subject! What a great novel is there! The United States, from the earliest times, has swarmed with just such jitney messiahs as Dylks—some of them even more self-deluded than he was, some of them plain rogues. Joseph Smith, Schlatter, Mary Baker C. Eddy, John Alexander Dowie, the prophets of the Shakers, the Holy Rollers, the Holy Ghost and Us maniacs, the Seventh Day Adventists, the various Menonites, the nigger Methodists—the list is a long and juicy one. The spectacle of a Billy Sunday assaulting Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Kansas City and Boston is not new; there have been periodical outbreaks of this same religious savagery ever since the Great Awakening of 1734, and before that time the colonies were full of heretic-hunters, and the politics of some of them was chiefly a combat between theologians. To be an American, indeed, means to carry a depressing cargo of religious balderdash; the great-grandfathers of two-thirds of us thought that hell was yawning for them, and were willing to believe anything in order to escape. It is thus always easy to get a hearing for theological ideas in the United States; they enter into our very laws and customs, and are heard with a gravity that it would be hard to match anywhere else in Christendom. Democracy, Puritanism, Philistinism—they are sisters under their skins—nay, they are one and the same. And yet how little the latter-day Puritan appears in our literature—how seldom he has been studied objectively, and his quirks platted. A penetrating and admirable small sketch appears in a book I have already mentioned: E. W. Howe's "The Story of a Country Town." But Howe had other fish to fry; he slapped in his Methodist hound of heaven brilliantly, and then passed on to melodrama and

the pains of young love. I advocate a novel by Dreiser, to be called "The Puritan"—a full-length study, in all his relentless meticulousness, of the sort of fellow who contributes money to Billy Sunday funds, and believes that all will go to hell who are not purged by total immersion in water, and opposes Sunday baseball and moving-pictures, and whoops for prohibition, and delights in vice crusades, and has, perchance, an eye for a shapely leg. In New York this gladiator of the gospels tends to disappear; save when some new Parkhurst or Comstock heats up his fires, he is seldom heard of. But in the hinterland he rages so steadily that he may be almost accepted as the normal American type. And there is an endless supply of mad mullahs, all divinely inspired and impassioned, to keep him snorting. Few of them, in these later days, actually claim to be God, but all of them claim to be on intimate and confidential terms with Him, and all of them launch thunderbolts of anathema on every man who ventures to hoot at their revelations.

§ 2.

Of the other fiction of the current boiling the best, and by long odds, is to be found in several volumes of short stories, and the best of these short stories are not properly fiction at all, but two-thirds fact. They are in a book called "The Further Side of Silence," by Sir Hugh Clifford, K.C.M.G. (*Doubleday-Page*). This Clifford, if he is not actually the man who discovered Joseph Conrad, is at least the man who first set Conrad on his legs. A glance at his own writing shows why he was so alert to the merits of the great Pole. He is, in fact, a writer of very considerable skill himself, and in these Malay sketches he is writing of a people and a country that he knows intimately, for he went out to the Federated Malay States as a boy in his teens, and he remained there, off and on, until he became their Governor. Here he pre-

sents vivid and intensely interesting pictures of the Malay in all the situations of daily life—hunting, fighting, thieving, marrying, dying. There is a truly capital account of a running amuck, and another of the intrigues at a petty Malay court. The gusto of a true story-teller is in all of the sketches; their half-savage people live and breathe; one need not be told that Clifford knows his little brown brother from head to heels, and has an old affection for him. No better reading is in the month's books.

"Tales of the Pampas," by W. H. Hudson (*Knopf*), leaves me cold, as his "Green Mansions" did. This Hudson is now enjoying a boom, with John Galsworthy thumping the tom-tom for him, and great combers and breakers of over-praise beating 'round him. His present stories deal with the Argentina of sixty or seventy years ago, before the railroad broke the immense loneliness of the pampas. A supernatural touch is in them; one hears of women turned into birds, and other such doings. But I am unable to find any noticeable skill in the way they are told; even the style, indeed, lacks the music that relieved the dullness of "Green Mansions." Nor do I find anything comparable to "Silence" or "The Seven Who Were Hanged" in "The Crushed Flower," by Leonid Andreyev (*Knopf*), a volume made up of five short stories and three novelettes. Andreyev is undoubtedly a fictioneer of very high talents, but he, too, has his bad moments, and some of them overtook him when he was writing "The Crushed Flower." As for "The Turtles of Tasman," by Jack London (*Macmillan*), it contains seven poor stories and one good one. The good one is "Finis," a tale of the Klondike. Needless to say, it is devoid of those banal "ideas" with which Dr. London so often corrupts his fiction. When he sits him down to tell a simple tale, he usually does it with great success, but when he grows scientific or expository he quickly becomes tiresome. Finally, there is "The Whale and the Grasshop-

per," by Seumas O'Brien (*Little-Brown*), a book of fantastic fables, many of them very amusing. But I'd rather see a volume of Mr. O'Brien's longer stories, already grown familiar in the magazines. They have loud laughs in them; they are Irish farce at its best; they rescue the Irish literary renaissance from its prevailing melancholy.

§ 3.

In the remaining fiction there is little to arrest the exploratory eye. Perhaps the best of it is to be found in "Royal Highness," by Thomas Mann (*Knopf*), a story dealing very minutely and often very amusingly with the life of a German grand ducal family. It was written before the war, and is thus free from the current fustian. "The House of Luck," by Harris Dickson (*Small-Maynard*), is a tale of love, gallantry and villainy in the Vicksburg of the thirties, and curiously enough, considering the usual liveliness of the author, it is written in a stilted and tedious style. "Filling His Own Shoes," by Henry C. Rowland (*Houghton-Mifflin*), is a stupid confection in the W. J. Locke manner, with a shoe clerk for hero; it would be difficult to imagine anything more incredible, either as to characters or as to incidents. "Dr. Nick," by L. M. Steele (*Small-Maynard*), is a piece of sentimentality running to 439 pages, with an immigrant boy and girl as hero and heroine. "Betty at Fort Blizzard," by Molly Elliot Séawell (*Lippincott*), and "The Romance of a Christmas Card," by Kate Douglas Wiggin (*Houghton-Mifflin*), are sheer mush; both ladies seem to lose their old cunning as year chases year. "A Drake, by George!" by John Trevena (*Knopf*), is a highly labored and not often intriguing farce, with a story-book sea captain for its chief personage. "The Emperor of Portugalia," by Selma Lagerlöf (*Doubleday-Page*), is quite the worst tale by this author so far translated. It tells how an old Swedish peasant, when his only daugh-

ter disappears into the maw of a large city, turns to the delusion that she has married an emperor, and that he himself is an emperor, too. Not a bad idea; its opportunities, indeed, are many and obvious. But Mlle. Lagerlöf quite fails to make anything of it. "Quaker-Born," by Ian Campbell Hannah (*Shaw*), "The Old Blood," by Frederic Palmer (*Dodd-Mead*), and "Told in a French Garden," by Mildred Aldrich (*Small-Maynard*), all deal with the war and all are bad, with Dr. Palmer's story leading them as worst.

§ 4.

"The average actor," says Arthur Hornblow, in "Training for the Stage" (*Lippincott*), "holds the mirror up to nature and sees in it only the reflection of himself. . . . In France they call an actor a *Mas-tu-vu*, which, anglicised, means a Have-you-seen-me." . . . The learned critic, so far sound, evades plumbing the psychological springs of this astounding and almost invariable vanity, this endless bumptiousness of the mime, this hall-mark of the *cabotin* in all climes and all ages. His one attempt is banal: "a foolish public makes much of him." Nonsense, my dear Herr Kollege! The sprouting Coque-lin is full of hot and rancid gases long before a foolish public has had a fair chance to make anything of him at all, and he continues to emit them long after it has tried him, condemned him and bidden him be damned. There is, indeed, little choice in the virulence of their self-respect between the Broadway star who is slobbered over by press agents and fat women and the poor ham who plays thinking parts in No. 7 road companies. The two are alike charged to the limit; one more ohm, or degree, or molecule, and they would burst. Actors begin where professional dancers, Fifth Avenue rectors and Chautauqua orators leave off; the most modest of them (barring a few unearthly traitors to the craft) matches the conceit of the solitary cutie on a slow ship. In their lofty eminence of

pomposity they are challenged only by negro bishops and grand opera tenors. I have spoken of the danger they run of bursting. In the case of tenors it must sometimes actually happen; even the least of them swells visibly as he sings, and permanently as he grows older. . . .

But why are actors, in general, such blatant and obnoxious asses, such ardent posturers and wind-bags? Why is it as surprising to find an unassuming and likable fellow among them as to find a Greek without fleas? The answer, for all its stumping of Dr. Hornblow, is really quite simple. To reach it one needs but consider the type of young man who normally gets stage-struck. Is he, taking averages, the intelligent, alert, ingenious, ambitious young fellow? Is he the young fellow with ideas in him, and a yearning for hard and difficult work? Is he the diligent reader, the hard student, the eager inquirer? No. He is, in the overwhelming main, the neighborhood fop and beau, the human clothes-horse, the nimble squire of dames. The youths of more active mind, emerging from adolescence, turn to business and the professions; the men that they admire and seek to follow are men of genuine distinction, men who have actually done difficult and valuable things, men who have fought good fights and are respected and envied by other men. The stage-struck youth is of a softer and more shallow sort. He seeks, not a chance to test his mettle by hard and useful work, but an easy chance to shine. He craves the regard, not of men, but of women. He is, in brief, a hollow and incompetent creature, a strutter and poseur, a popinjay, a pretty one. . . .

I thus beg the question, but explain the actor. He is this silly youngster grown older, but otherwise unchanged. An initiate of a profession requiring little more information, culture or capacity for ratiocination than that of the lady of joy, and surrounded in his work-shop by men who are as stupid, as vain and as empty as he himself will be

in the years to come, he suffers an arrest of development, and the little intelligence that may happen to be in him gets no chance to show itself. The result, in its usual manifestation, is the average bad actor—a man with the cerebrum of a floor-walker and the vanity of a fashionable clergyman. The result, in its highest and holiest form, is the actor-manager, with his retinue of press-agents, parasites and worshipping wenches—perhaps the most preposterous and awe-inspiring donkey that civilization has yet produced. To look for sense in a fellow of such equipment and such a history would be like looking for serviettes in a sailors' boarding-house.

By the same token, the relatively greater intelligence of actresses is explained. They are, at their worst, quite as bad as the generality of actors. There are she-stars who are all temperament and balderdash—intellectually speaking, beggars on horseback, servant girls well washed. But no one who knows anything about the stage need be told that it can show a great many more quick-minded and self-respecting women than intelligent men. And why? Simply because its women are recruited, in the main, from a class much above that which furnishes its men. It is, after all, not unnatural for a woman of considerable intelligence to aspire to the stage. It offers her, indeed, one of the most tempting careers that is open to her. She cannot hope to succeed in business, and in the other professions she is an unwelcome and much-scoffed-at intruder, but on the boards she can meet men on an equal footing. It is, therefore, no wonder that women of a relatively superior class often take to the business. . . . Once they embrace it, their superiority to their male colleagues is quickly manifest. All movements against puerility and imbecility in the drama have originated, not with actors, but with actresses—that is, in so far as they have originated among stage folks at all. The earliest Ibsen pioneers were such women as Madame Modjeska, Mrs. Fiske and Janet

Achurch; the men all hung back. Ibsen, it would appear, was aware of this superior alertness and took shrewd advantage of it. At all events, his most tempting acting parts are feminine ones. . . . The girls of the stage demonstrate this tendency against great difficulties. They have to carry a heavy handicap in the enormous number of women who seek the footlights merely to advertise their real profession, but despite all this, anyone who has the slightest acquaintance with stagefolk will testify that, taking one with another, the women have vastly more brains than the men and are appreciably less vain and idiotic. Relatively few actresses of any rank marry actors. They find close communion with the strutting brethren psychologically impossible. Stock brokers, dramatists and even theatrical managers are greatly to be preferred.

In committing to print these few modest and moderate observations upon actors, I make the usual reservation. That is to say, I admit specifically that there is a small minority of actors who approximate in good manners and sound intelligence the average of civilized men. But I hasten to add that this minority is very small, indeed, and that within my personal range of observation, it includes no more than four or five men. Many years ago Channing Pollock revealed to me that he had discovered the existence of an actor who was neither vain nor noisy, and proposed that he entertain me with a marvel by introducing me to the fellow. I proposed in reply that the introduction be postponed for six months in order to make sure. Three weeks later this actor was slugged by a stage hand for his gross and intolerable bumptiousness during a rehearsal, and before the expiration of the six months his manager had kicked him out and he returned to England. Since then, so I am informed, he has died decently in the trenches. It is thus possible, after all, that Pollock may have been essentially right. But I don't think so, and neither, I believe, does Pollock.

§ 5.

If I were younger and less immersed in obesity, I should like to write an article on the books that have quite failed of achieving their original purposes, and are yet of respectable use and potency for other purposes. For example, the Book of Revelation. The obvious aim of the learned author of this work was to bring the early Christians into accord by telling them authoritatively what to expect and hope for; its actual effect during eighteen hundred years has been to split them into a multitude of camps, and so set them to denouncing, damning, snitching on, jailing and murdering one another. Again, consider the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini. Ben wrote it to prove that he was an honest man, a mirror of all the virtues, an injured innocent; the world, reading it, hails him respectfully as the noblest, the boldest, and gaudiest liar that ever lived. Again, turn to "Gulliver's Travels." It was planned by its rev. author as a devastating satire, a horrible piece of cynicism; it survives as a story-book for sucklings. Yet again, there is "Hamlet." Shakespeare wrote it frankly to make money for a theatrical manager; it has lost money for theatrical managers ever since. Yet again, there is Caesar's "De Bello Gallico." Julius composed it to thrill and inflame the Romans; its sole use to-day is to stupefy and sicken school-boys. . . . Which brings us, by a drop of 10,000 metres, to "Doreen and the Sentimental Bloke," by C. J. Dennis (*Lane*), a book written wholly in rhyme, and hence obviously intended to be poetry. If the obvious is the true, then the author's intent fails, for the thing is mawkish, tedious and idiotic. But though the book thus misses its apparent purpose by a mile, it very effectively achieves a very different purpose, for it is an excellent compendium of Australian slang, and the study of that slang will interest every connoisseur of the English language and its dialects.

Mr. Dennis's protagonist is a Mel-

bourne loafer, and the tongue in which the volume is written is the modified Cockney of the Melbourne docks. One notes immediately the battle that is going on down there between English slang and American slang, with an ambitious native slang occasionally taking a hand. The basis of the new dialect is plainly the Cockney speech of the Thames-side; the low-caste Australian, indeed, is as fond of *blimed* and *lydy* and as uncertain of his *h's* as a London costermonger. In his vocabulary, as in his pronunciation, there are numerous reminiscences of England. He is full of such words as *bloke*, *beak* (for magistrate), *cove*, *quid*, *toff* and *fag*. But to them he has added so many Americanisms that his brothers at home would probably find it hard to follow his discourse. He has borrowed, for example, scores of such verbs as *to kid*, *to plug along*, *to back and fill*, *to beef*, *to bluff*, *to cop out*, *to fade away*, *to jolt* and *to rile*, and scores of such adjectives as *rattled*, *snide*, *dead* (as a superlative), *square* and *tough* (e.g., *to qualify luck*). Many characteristic phrases have gone over from American into Australian; *to chew the rag*, *to go chase yourself*, *to take a tumble*, *to get it in the neck*, *knock-out-drops*, *for keeps*, *to get wise*, *up to me*. Many others (and single words with them) have gone over with changes in meaning. *To mug*, in Australia, does not mean to photograph, but to kiss. The *conk* (conch) is not the head, but the nose. *Leery* does not mean sophisticated, suspicious, but vulgar, low. The words *tom* and *tart*, applied to a girl, seem to have no disparaging significance in the antipodes; Mr. Dennis' bloke is always referring to his sweetheart as a *tart*. Moreover, certain familiar American words and phrases have been borrowed in substance, but changed in form. *On the level* appears as *on the straight*. *All in* has become *all out*. *Gasabo* has been shortened to *gazob*. *Going some* has been turned into *going strong*. But *nerve*, *peach*, *splice*, *scrap* and *stunt* have gone over unchanged.

Of native Australian slang Mr. Dennis offers a number of interesting specimens. '*Ead serang* is obviously by Cockney out of Malay. *Bonser*, perhaps, may be traced to *bonny*, for it signifies charm or excellence, and is often applied to a girl. But what of *spruik*, which means a 'showman's speech and is apparently synonymous to the American *spiel*? And what of *ribuck*, an interjection indicating assent? And what of *chiack*, signifying banter? *To crack a boo* is easily understandable. It means primarily to betray emotion, and by metaphor to divulge a secret. To be gloomy is to *have the joes*. A spoil-sport is a *nark*. *To run the rabbit* is exactly equivalent to the American *to rush the can*. A *squiz* is a brief glance. *To smooze* is to flatter (perhaps from the Yiddish *to schmoos*). *To snuff it* is to die. A steady job is a *lurk*. Anything that is bogus is *slanter*. A gullible fellow is not a *sucker*, but a *punter*. To court a girl is to *track with* her. . . .

Altogether, a rich and racy slang. The English and American strains, coalescing, seem to be producing a native stock that is ingenious and interesting. Unluckily, it is impossible to deduce any of the rules of Australian grammar from Mr. Dennis' stanzas. His sentences, though made up chiefly of slang, are usually conventional in structure. In the *Volkssprache* of the United States gradual changes in the conjugation of the verbs and the declension of the pronouns have been going on for a century past, and there has been so vast an enrichment of the vocabulary that the language is now quite unintelligible to an Englishman. I have in manuscript a grammar of this national tongue and shall probably publish it in a year or two. So far as I know it has never got any attention from the academic grammarians. They continue, professorlike, to teach a grammar that is exotic and artificial, and a syntax that no ordinary American, save at times of conscious pedantry, ever so much as bows to after he leaves school.